CLARENCE THOMAS v. THURGOOD MARSHALL

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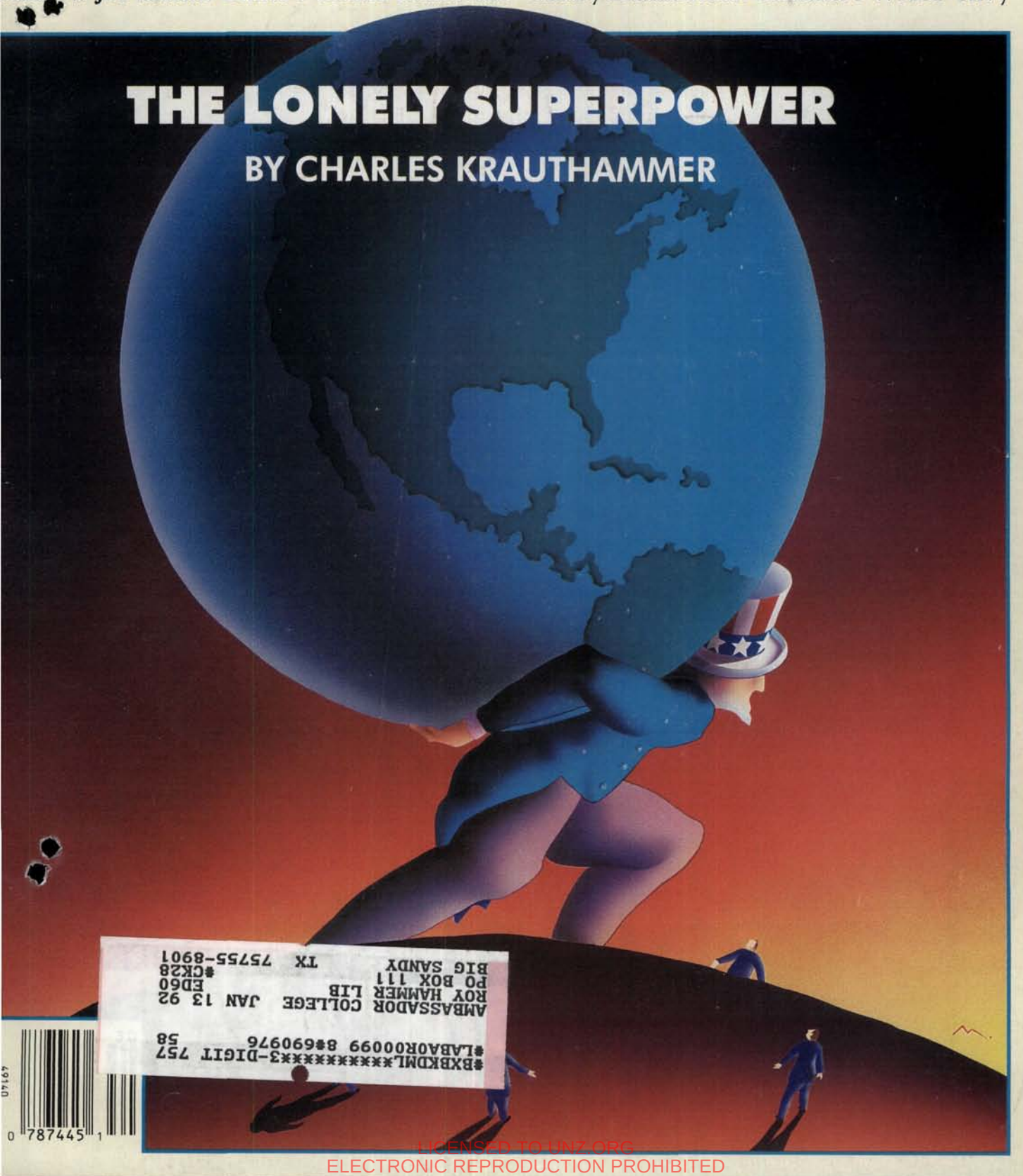
# THE NEW REPUBLIC

Andrew J. Nathan: China's cosmic democrats • Sidney Blumenthal: Sununu's WASP envy

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# CORRESPONDENCE

## The Russia grouse

**To the editors:**

One can sympathize with the uncontrollable rage out of which Tatyana Tolstaya wrote her screed against Mikhail Gorbachev ("President Potemkin," May 27), except that she chose as a foil my biography, *The Man Who Changed the World*. Her diatribe read like a scream of self-loathing by a member of the "betrayed intelligentsia," who reversed the noble history of Russian intellectuals when they gave their hearts and minds to Mr. Gorbachev, only to see him grow callous to their demands for true democratic reforms. It is probably too much to expect of such a writer, allowed halfway out of the cage of lies to express the anguish of generations, to see the most recent Russian reformer in any but the context of his domestic failures.

But Ms. Tolstaya doesn't know much about the American intelligentsia. Not having our noses rubbed daily in degenerated goods and worthless currency, we have the privileged perspective to see Mr. Gorbachev's impact on the world at large. Ms. Tolstaya laughs at all those in the West who are "naive" in thinking that the cold war is over. She wrote triumphantly in the April *New York Review of Books*, "The events of the last few months have shown the West what has been clear to Soviet people for almost two years: Nothing good can be expected of Gorbachev." Much of what Mr. Gorbachev has done to change the world is eradicated in that remarkable sentence—the reversal of the arms race, the managed revolutions of Eastern Europe, the revocation of totalitarianism, and his forsaking of the Party's monopoly on power, permitting the rise of a new generation of popular politicians, who make a return to the past all but impossible. Indeed, in the very same month she wrote him off, Mr. Gorbachev reversed course yet again—as my book predicted he would—and turned back to the reformers he had abandoned, agreeing with leaders of nine republics to reorganize the union and offering to work with his archrival, Boris Yeltsin.

In her sweeping effort to discredit me, Ms. Tolstaya charges my book with "illiterate mistakes beyond counting." But her historical examples are open to subjective interpretation; e.g., refuting my statement that "for a thousand years . . . the Russian people had no experience of liberal democracy or economic competition," she offers *Novgorod* (local), the reforms of Peter the Great and Alexander II (both authoritarians), and the Decembrist revolt (a total failure). None of these represented democracy as a formative national experience. There are a few errors of history. But a reviewer who did not come to her task with an idée fixe might also be impressed with the many insights about Soviet life and the country's leader that are both accurate and arresting.

GAIL SHEEHY
*New York, New York*

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## Zbig deal

**To the editors:**

In "Trial and Error" (June 3) Laurie Mylroie proposes a variety of interesting measures designed to rid the world of Saddam Hussein. And she concludes her article by pointing out the bankruptcy of the Bush administration's postwar policy: "Already the legitimation of Saddam Hussein has begun."

Actually, the legitimation of the Iraqi tyrant began a scant three years ago in an article by Ms. Mylroie in the Summer 1988 issue of *Orbis*, and may account for some of the zeal with which she has recently pursued Saddam's ouster. Among her prophetic conclusions at the time:

"From an American perspective, the more Saddam Hussein exercises control over the Baath party, including the ideologues, the better."

"Iraq and the United States need each other. The United States could give far more economic aid on easier terms, and it could provide military assistance."

Although the Arabist elites in the State Department did not go so far as to offer Stealth fighters and Tomahawk missiles to Saddam, they appear to have followed much of Ms. Mylroie's advice. Therefore, I nominate her to receive a "Zbig" award (from "Gulfballs," March [illegible]) under the category "Best Actress in a Dramatic Conversion."

MIKE CHAPMAN
*Washington, D.C.*

**Laurie Mylroie replies:**

The 1988 article argued that the Iran-Iraq war had made Saddam's rule fragile. To keep power he would have to initiate a process of political reform, à la Egypt after 1973, and Washington could obtain Iraq's

*continued on page 42*

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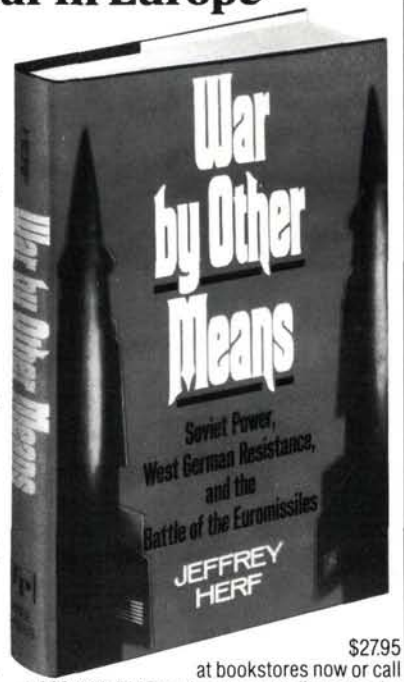


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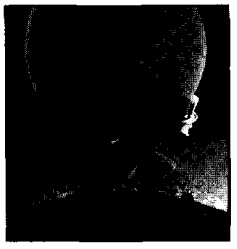

Cover by Michael McGurl for THE NEW REPUBLIC. Article on page 23.

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2 **CORRESPONDENCE** Gail Sheehy's passages, &c.

4 **MICHAEL KINSLEY** TRB: THE RIGHT CURE A soak-the-rich plan from the Heritage Foundation.

5 **THE EDITORS** STAYING THERE Saddam's nuclear ambitions are another reminder that George Bush hasn't won the Gulf war yet. NOTEBOOK Bush's race quota, &c.

7 **SCOTT SHUGER** LOS ANGELES POSTCARD: NAME GAME The suburbs get a makeover.

8 **MORTON KONDRACKE** UNSETTLING The Bush administration's brewing war with Israel.

10 **TINA ROSENBERG** TIME OF CHOLERA Peru's surprising success against an epidemic.

12 **GARY L. McDOWELL** DOUBTING THOMAS Is the new Supreme Court nominee any less of a judicial activist than Thurgood Marshall?

15 **SIDNEY BLUMENTHAL** THE GENIUS If John Sununu were as smart as he thinks he is, he would have given his relentless social-climbing a rest.

19 **STEVEN KELMAN** SWEDEN SOUR? Lingonberry socialism hits the skids.

23 **CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER** THE LONELY SUPERPOWER Running a unipolar world is a dirty job, but someone's got to do it. Better it be us. The alternatives are either fantasies or nightmares.

28 **STANLEY KAUFFMANN** ON FILMS: INTERMITTENT FEVER In *Jungle Fever*, Spike Lee's movie about interracial romance, the screenplay sputters but the directing succeeds.

29 **ROBERT BRUSTEIN** ON THEATER: THE DREAMS OF INGMAR BERGMAN Producing Strindberg and O'Neill, the Swedish director stages strong night visions.

31 **ANDREW J. NATHAN** TIANANMEN AND THE COSMOS When they speak about democracy, Chinese dissidents don't necessarily mean what we think they do.

36 **STANISLAW BARANCZAK** LIFE IS ELSEWHERE *Immortality* by Milan Kundera; *Love and Garbage* by Ivan Klima

39 **DAVID FROMKIN** EYELESS IN SUEZ *Suez* by Keith Kyle

40 **JUDITH HALL** POEM *Postcard of Degas' Washerwomen Carrying Washing*

43 **LEON WIESELTIER** WASHINGTON DIARIST: CABALIST KIBITZING

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## FROM WASHINGTON

# The right cure

Health care costs are bankrupting the nation and 34 million Americans already have no health insurance at all. Why? Because "today's basic system evolved not in response to the needs of consumers, but according to the marketing and professional objectives of suppliers of health care." Who says so? Ralph Nader? Long-Haired Physicians For Socialized Medicine or some such group? No, it's the Heritage Foundation, of all people. Washington's leading right-wing think tank has produced the simplest, most promising, and, in important ways, most progressive idea for health care reform.

The Heritage proposal zeroes in on a huge, unacknowledged government program: the tax exemption for employer-paid health insurance. This costs the federal government $48 billion a year in lost revenue, and the states lose billions more. As a method of subsidizing health care, it has several defects. It is regressive: the higher your tax bracket and the more lavish your health plan, the larger your government subsidy. It makes those who are covered—most Americans—almost indifferent to the costs of the services they buy. It does nothing for those without company health benefits.

Heritage would fully tax employer-paid health care. But it would offer a tax *credit* for health care costs of any sort. A typical family might get a credit of 20 percent. That is, it would get to subtract 20 cents from its tax bill for every dollar it spent on health care (including what employers spent on its behalf). Those with lower incomes or abnormally high health care costs would get a bigger credit—up to 50 cents on the dollar, or even more. Those with very high incomes, for whom health care costs are a negligible fraction, might get no credit at all.

The credit would be "refundable"—meaning that the government would write a check to those who pay little or no income tax. Medicare for the elderly and Medicaid for the jobless poor would continue. Heritage would require all Americans to prove that they have obtained health insurance (the way most states require you to prove you have auto insurance). But the government would guarantee through these various devices that no family would have to pay more than 10 percent of its income on health care.

People might still get health insurance through their employers, but there would be no special reason to do so. With alternative arrangements more widely available, and equally subsidized, there would no longer be the terror of losing your insurance when you lose or change your job. The presumption behind the Heritage scheme is that people would become more involved in making their own health care arrangements and more sensitive to the costs and benefits.

The idea is to invigorate competition while still protecting people from ruinous expense. If people are paying something like 80 cents on the dollar for health care, they will be better shoppers. They are more likely to choose efficient health maintenance organizations over traditional insurance. They might choose not to insure at all for routine, manageable expenses (they would still get the credit), thereby eliminating reams of forms. The Heritage plan's author, Stuart Butler, claims that even more red tape can be saved as market efficiency replaces bureaucratic supervision in restraining health costs.

The Heritage Foundation does not leap to acknowledge how progressive its proposal is. To start, it amounts to a major tax increase on the well-to-do. Any top-bracket taxpayer is currently getting a health care subsidy of something like 40 cents on the dollar (including the state income tax deduction). This would be reduced to 20 cents or even zero for the very affluent. A $200,000 taxpayer with a $10,000 insurance package—not uncommon—could pay $4,000 more in taxes if Heritage has its way. The average taxpayer in the 15 percent bracket, by contrast, would come out slightly ahead if the exemption was replaced by a 20 percent credit. The working poor and their families (a category that includes most of those 34 million uninsured) would get a generous boost.

If the Heritage plan actually works as advertised to reduce health care costs through competition, it will be redistributive in another way: by reducing the incomes of doctors, medical equipment manufacturers, pharmaceutical companies, and others who extract what economists call "monopoly rents" from the current system. These folks will squawk. That makes the Heritage proposal a nice test for conservative politicians. Do they really support the free market, or do they merely support the business status quo?

Philosophically, for all its talk of markets, Heritage with this proposal accepts—at least in health care—the basic principle of socialism. In fact, it goes beyond socialism. Not only does society have a duty, through the government, to guarantee everybody affordable access to decent health care, but the government can *require* its citizens to obtain health care insurance whether they want to or not.

Then too with this proposal Heritage abandons the tiresome right-wing conceit that it is illegitimate to talk about tax subsidies or tax expenditures. Health care is just one area where huge subsidies through the tax code go unexamined. Housing is another: the home mortgage interest deduction costs the government far more than all direct housing programs for the poor put together. A dollar the government forgos through tax policy affects the deficit exactly the same as a dollar the government spends directly. But conservatives treasure the fatuous argument that any talk of "tax expenditures" assumes that all money belongs to the government except what the government allows you to keep. We'll hear no more of that nonsense from the Heritage Foundation, I trust.

This proposal is not the panacea the energetic Heritage publicity machine would have you believe. Misguided tax policy is only one reason Adam Smith's invisible hand can't function in medical care the way it does in other markets. Even under Heritage's plan, people will be insured and therefore largely indifferent to the cost of individual doctor and hospital bills. Insurance aside, most people have neither the ability nor the inclination to decide what lab tests they really need or to bargain with a brain surgeon. Private and government cost control bureaucracies will probably still be needed. But the Heritage plan at least would encourage market discipline that is almost totally lacking now, and would meanwhile provide universal coverage by (don't tell anybody) taxing the rich to pay for it.

Thus this Heritage proposal is a nice test for liberals as well as for conservatives. It would address an undeniably progressive goal. What it would not do is to have the government take over more of the purchase and/or delivery of health care. It is quite different from the widely touted Canadian government-run system, and from the leading Democratic proposal that combines a new federal insurance program with a requirement that employers provide insurance for their workers. If you're looking for universal health care protection and at least a shot at cost control, the Heritage plan looks pretty good. If you're looking for an excuse to expand the government, look elsewhere.

**MICHAEL KINSLEY**



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THE NEW REPUBLIC

JULY 29, 1991

# STAYING THERE

The president's Independence Day radio address resounded with all the patriotic grandiloquence his speechwriting staff could muster. George Bush lavished accolades upon America's "sons and daughters [who] stood watch on the desert and seas of the Gulf, bearing witness by their presence to the vision that compelled us." He plucked the same, worn Churchillian chords in speeches to flag-waving throngs in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and Marshfield, Missouri. But the spectacle of Mr. Bush's glory-basking, set against the background of the renewed depredations of a resurgent Saddam Hussein, is a bit much to stomach. What's happened in Iraq since our grand "victory" isn't a bit of rain at a Fourth of July picnic; it's a deluge, washing the guests, the food, and the marching band out to sea.

The notion that the administration's war council knew what it was doing when Mr. Bush ended the war after 100 hours has lost any credibility it might previously have had. At first some believed (though not we) that continued sanctions and internal resistance would finish the job of replacing Saddam's regime with a more palatable form of government. But the administration's failure to come to the aid of Kurdish and Shiite rebel forces, after encouraging their rebellion, made clear that it was more concerned with preserving the territorial integrity of Iraq and a propitious "balance of power" in the region than getting rid of the dictator or protecting persecuted "minorities," one of which constitutes 65 percent of the population. Our belated, inadequate, and soon-to-be prematurely withdrawn "safe havens" are a pathetic cover for our sorry abdication of responsibility following the war. The latest horrifying, unsurprising news is that Saddam perseveres in his efforts to build atom bombs.

In his January 27 press briefing, General Norman Schwarzkopf announced that Iraq's nuclear capability had been "neutralized." If that wasn't assurance enough, Iraq promised, as part of the April 3 cease-fire agreement, to hand over or destroy all nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons as well as its large ballistic missiles. Saddam seemed to comply, by handing over chemical and biological stocks, destroying some of the missiles, and allowing the United Nations to inspect eighty-eight pounds of enriched uranium registered under the nuclear non-proliferation agreement, of which Iraq is a signatory. But as the Pentagon learned from an electrical engineer who defected to U.S. forces in northern Iraq in May, Saddam was concealing as much as ninety additional pounds of weapons-grade enriched uranium, in violation of the truce agreement. According to this source and satellite intelligence, Saddam continues his nuclear program using homemade calutrons, an obsolete technology that has nonetheless brought him terrifyingly close to being able to produce two Nagasaki-type weapons.

Saddam wants nuclear bombs for one simple reason: revenge. Through nuclear blackmail, or actual genocide, he intends to reverse his humiliation at the hands of the United States. Both before and after the war, he swore that he had no nuclear program, had never had a nuclear program, had no interest in a nuclear program. When the president responded with an explicit threat of more bombing, Saddam acknowledged enriching uranium—but only one pound for peaceful purposes. He also admitted possessing the calutrons he promised did not exist—but only thirty of them. Saddam is, of course, still lying about what he has, in an attempt to preserve as much hardware and software as he can.

The U.N., charged with enforcing the terms of the cease-fire, has proved comically weak. After the United States tipped off U.N. inspectors about the location of the Iraqi uranium processing plants, the Iraqis played cat and mouse with them for two weeks, at one point firing automatic weapons over their heads to discourage photography of a convoy of illicit equipment. The U.N.'s only lever is to continue sanctions. As weapons go, economic sanctions are more cruel and less discriminate than any of the bombs we dropped on Baghdad. They may result in the deaths of thousands of Iraqi children, from starvation and disease, by the end of the summer, but are unlikely to make Saddam budge from his fortified and well-stocked underground bunker. Nor does the nuclear non-proliferation re-



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gime, which failed to detect that Saddam was on the doorstep of becoming a nuclear power before the war, have any effective enforcement mechanism. It falls to the United States—if non-proliferation is to mean anything at all—to enforce the terms of the cease-fire. And if non-proliferation cannot be enforced on a country that has signed a treaty and been humiliated in war, then it is largely meaningless.

Mr. Bush has sought to make Saddam comply by means of belligerent rhetoric. His threat of force may be effective in getting Saddam temporarily to turn over what uranium and enriching equipment he has. But even then the problem, as Thomas Friedman of *The New York Times* recently put it, "is not his capabilities but his intentions." Even if the United States were to bomb Iraq's nuclear sites (and Saddam successfully disguised many of them in the Gulf war), there would still be the problem of Saddam's potential. It is not as hard to build weapons of mass destruction as it used to be. Saddam was able to mine uranium ore and enrich it without imported equipment. If not for the war, it is likely he would now have a bomb, according to Leonard Spector of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, who until recently remained a skeptic about the state of Iraq's nuclear development. It now appears that not even the Israelis knew how close Saddam was to building a bomb. Despite the war, he may be able to build one yet.

This predicament, it should be noted, is no one's fault but Mr. Bush's. It was clear almost from the moment he ended the war that we were leaving a job unfinished. Some of the consequences of this mistake cannot be undone. It is, however, no less imperative to finish the war. This doesn't mean occupying Iraq, but it does mean deposing Saddam Hussein. Whether this is accomplished by U.S.-supported internal rebellion, smart bombs, or an assassination squad matters little. If Bush feels constrained by the executive order that bans the murder of foreign leaders, he can issue another executive order to permit it, just this once. It ought to be possible to get rid of Saddam without a full-scale military invasion. The termination of Baath rule should, in any case, become a stated goal of U.S. policy—and if Iraq is fragmented in the process, the stability of the region will not suffer unduly. If Saddam does not scrupulously honor a deadline for surrendering every ounce of uranium, along with everything else covered by the cease-fire, we should enforce its terms against the violator, rather than his unfortunate subjects. Until the butcher of Baghdad is gone or buried, the Gulf war cannot be won, despite all of Mr. Bush's triumphalist rhetoric.

## NOTEBOOK

**P**ICTURE THIS: A white hand in a loose-fitting black sleeve crumples up a rejection letter. The letter is on White House stationery. A voice-over intones: "YOU NEEDED THAT JOB. BUT THE VACANCY WENT TO A LESS QUALIFIED MINORITY BECAUSE OF A QUOTA." Such a spot, modeled on Jesse Helms's infamous 1990 reelection advertisement, would capture nicely the president's hypocrisy on the issue of reverse discrimination in his nomination of Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court. No one seriously believes Mr. Bush when he says he thinks Mr. Thomas is the most qualified person for the job of Supreme Court justice. Thomas, who has won little distinction as a federal judge and less as a legal scholar, may or may not be the best qualified conservative black for the job. Administration sources have acknowledged that the only serious candidates for the vacancy were black or Hispanic. In other words, Thomas was hired under a strict racial quota. Meanwhile, Mr. Bush continues to hammer the Democrats for promoting quotas in employment. What was that racially insensitive expression about the pot and kettle?

**R**OCKETS' RED GLARE: Kurds in northern Iraq who fled Saddam Hussein found another thing to be afraid of last week when U.S. troops stationed in the region celebrated the Fourth of July with a round of fireworks. Already fearing for their lives, the Kurds had to be reassured that the bright flashes overhead were not bombs. Loudspeakers explained to the terrified refugees in the Zahko marketplace: "There's no cause for alarm. The fireworks are to celebrate a traditional American holiday." Maybe we should warn them about Halloween in advance.

**W**ILDER SIDE: The governor of Virginia's original aversion to the nomination of Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court—he complained that the Catholic Thomas owed "allegiance to the pope"—was mystifying for more than one reason. The first is that Mr. Thomas is no longer a practicing Catholic: he attends an Episcopal church. The second is that objections to Catholics on the Supreme Court are only valid if they are related to an actual position that a justice has taken. But Mr. Thomas has as yet taken no such position—and Mr. Wilder was referring to none. The governor's slur on Mr. Thomas was also unconstitutional. Article VI of the Constitution affirms that "no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States." Mr. Wilder has apologized, of course, but we're not sure for what—for being misinformed, a bigot, or simply unaware of the Constitution.

**U**NCOOL RULE: As anyone who has ever waited forlornly behind velvet ropes at 3 a.m. knows only too well, nightclub bouncers can be cruel people. But according to a recent ruling by a California judge, they're also civil rights offenders. By having bouncers arbitrarily decide who can or cannot come in, a judge ruled, a



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club was guilty of "nothing more than a smoke screen for blatant discriminatory behavior, with an awesome potential for abuse." The club, it should be noted, was not accused of discriminating on the basis of race—merely on the grounds of dress code. Now, we are informed, the unhip have legal protection. We look forward to future lawsuits in which wide lapels win affirmative action damages, Manchester-derived rave haircuts get accused of fashio-centrism, and entry quotas are installed for people who refuse to wear Versace vests. Next stop: lawsuits against sales clerks who look dismissively at your Hush Puppies? Couturial harassment? We have been warned.

**H**OME NEWS: With this issue, editor Hendrik Hertzberg takes a leave of absence to write a book on the American Constitution. While he is away, Andrew Sullivan is assuming his responsibilities. ●

**LOS ANGELES POSTCARD**

# NAME GAME

*By Scott Shuger*

"I'm all for it, and of course my spirits were raised by the news," said one Soviet citizen, who added that the development had put him "on a whole new plane." What was this uplifting change? Boris Yeltsin's election victory? Mikhail Gorbachev's renewed commitment to a free market economy? No, it was the vote in Leningrad to revert to the city's previous name, St. Petersburg. Many Americans probably dismissed such fervor as curious and even foolish: Don't the Russians have more important things to worry about? But there's at least one place in this country where such linguistic exhilaration rings true—Los Angeles, the world capital of geographic self-invention.

In LA it's important to have your very own town name for specifically where you live, but it's crucial to have the *right* name for that place. In 1928 Laurelwood did what it could to bask in the reflected glories of the booming movie business by becoming Studio City. About the same time the residents of Runnymede decided that local author Edgar Rice Burroughs's world-renowned hero suited them better than the site of some obscure and ancient British paper-shuffling exercise, so they turned their town into Tarzana. In 1931 the women's club in Owensmouth, originally named for the Owens River water brought to Los Angeles in the scandal memorialized in the movie *Chinatown*, did what it could to remove any subsequent taint by opting instead for the Indian name of Canoga Park. In the early '40s the inhabitants of Girard likewise felt they were suffering too much from an association with the name of the real estate con man who founded the place, so they rechristened their neighborhood Woodland Hills. Other such aliases dot the LA sprawl, all Norma Jean Bakers trying to be Marilyn Monroes: Sun Valley began life somewhat more prosaically as Roscoe, and North Hollywood was née Lankershim, to name a few more.

The town makeover trend is on the upswing as LA's middle class becomes more vulnerable and more neurotic. Increasingly, daily life in the city is best understood as glitz reacting to grit. With social problems from gang violence to substandard schools to unworkable transportation pressing in from all sides, the basic instinct here isn't to address changes. It's to change addresses.

Take the residents of Chandler Estates, a tony pocket within the southern edge of the generally blue-collar Van Nuys. They have recently been lobbying to regain the position they say they once had (before the introduction of zip codes in 1962) as part of the more swank Sherman Oaks. "Everybody wants to be upscale," explains Sally Michaels of the Greater Sherman Oaks Chamber of Commerce. "This area wants to hook onto an area that has some snobbism. I mean, Van Nuys is *industrial*—it's got General Motors and Anheuser Busch plants!"

Meanwhile, just a few miles to the north, a group of homeowners in the "nice" part of Sepulveda who were worried about what the problems in the "bad" part of Sepulveda would do to their property values managed to get the city to rename their neck of the woods North Hills. It didn't matter that there is nary a hill in the area, or that the time spent on the effort by city employees certifying petition signatures and then taking down all those distinctive blue and white name signs and putting up new ones is time not spent on Sepulveda's street crime and drugs. One resident of the "new" town summed up the episode perfectly in a letter to *The Los Angeles Times*: "Where else in the world could one get to live in a better neighborhood without moving?"

In a similar spirit, Lake View Terrace, where Rodney King was beaten by police last March, had carved itself out of Pacoima just a few years ago. So don't be surprised if the next change in the neighborhood isn't better police procedures, or more civilian oversight, but something, shall we say, more nominal.

Don Eitner of the North Hollywood Chamber of Commerce went through all this last year when part of his town pulled away to become Valley Village. "It's homeowners' groups banding together to signify that their neighborhood is separate from the next guy's," he says. Eitner concludes that the trend "sets up separateness between communities rather than pulling them together," and points out that a lot of the seces-



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sionist areas become gated communities.

It's been four years now since the upscale part of Canoga Park seceded and got itself renamed West Hills (for some parts of town, that's the third name in sixty years). "Anybody has a right to a name they really like. If my children didn't like the names I gave them, then I think they should change them," says Joy Picus, who supported the change as the area's representative on the LA City Council. "The people in West Hills are just *thrilled* with the new name." Ron Rossen of the West Hills Chamber of Commerce recently told me that just being able to say your house is in West Hills rather than Canoga Park yields an increase in your property value of about 15 percent. In today's market that's an addition of at least $30,000 or $40,000. The source of these separatist name changes is no mystery to Arline DeSanctis, chief field deputy for City Councilman Joel Wachs: "It's usually the realtors that initiate them."

Like most things from LA, the area alias trend is probably coming your way soon. If you live in Detroit, expect to see new cities like Tailfin Terrace spring up here, Soul Music Knoll there. If you live in Buffalo, you may wake up to discover that you've moved overnight to Erie View Mission. Harlem could become the Upper Upper West Side; Roxbury, Lower Brookline. Who knows, as the budget deficit continues to mushroom, maybe the U.S. government will seize on the idea as a way of avoiding financing solutions to the real problems faced by Gorbachev and Yeltsin. "Funds for Soviet economic development—not feasible at this time," you might hear George Bush say sometime soon, "but look into that name change scenario. Ixnay on St. Petersburg—how about Finland Vista? And forget that Latvia thing—go with Baltic Park."

SCOTT SHUGER is a contributing editor of *The Washington Monthly*.

**Bush's West Bank quagmire.**

# UNSETTLING

*By Morton Kondracke*

During the press conference that followed his nomination of Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court on July 1, President Bush said there shouldn't be a "quid pro quo" between U.S. provision of $10 billion in loan guarantees for Israel to build housing for Jewish immigrants from the Soviet Union and cessation of settlement activity in Arab territories occupied by Israel in 1967. In spite of that statement, however, all indications are that the administration will apply some sort of linkage to the two issues this fall, and that a battle royal will ensue in Congress between Bush and supporters of Israel.

Administration officials say that Bush's quid pro quo remark was "not definitive" about what U.S. policy will be after Israel formally requests the guarantees. Bush made it clear in his press conference that he remains furious about Israeli settlement activity. "The best thing for Israel to do is to keep its commitment that was given at one point not to go in and build further settlements," he said. "We're not giving one inch on the settlements question."

A crunch over settlements has both personal and philosophical underpinnings. Bush aides accuse Israel's government of "bad faith" in complying with an October 1990 agreement that Israel would provide data on settlement activity and would not direct Soviet immigrants to the territories. White House aides say that they are "getting a runaround" on the numbers, especially on budget figures for Ariel Sharon's Housing Ministry, and that Israel is providing financial incentives to newcomers that violate the spirit of last year's agreement. Israel claims that there is a misunderstanding about what data it agreed to provide, and that the letter of the agreement on Soviet Jews is being adhered to. About 90,000 Jews currently live in the West Bank and Gaza, not counting Israeli-annexed East Jerusalem. Israel's Housing Ministry has announced plans to build homes for 50,000 more persons over the next two years—and for more than 150,000 over the next several years—15,000 of whom are likely to be Russians. These represent about 1.5 percent of the 1 million new arrivals from the Soviet Union.

Beyond the personal friction between Israeli and American leaders that was diminished during the Gulf war but is back in the aftermath, there is a yawning gap over how the Palestinian issue ought to be handled. Israeli leaders, and some Western academics, believe that the entire Palestinian nationalist movement—not only the Palestine Liberation Organization—is now moribund. If there is ever to be Palestinian self-rule, according to this view, it will occur only when leaders in the West Bank summon the courage to agree to a Camp David-style negotiating process with Israel. Israeli settlement activity might be an inducement for the Arabs to start autonomy talks soon, before Israel has occupied Arab lands forever.

The evidence of Palestinian defeat is, indeed, everywhere: the intifada has collapsed into random Arab stabbings of Israelis and systematic Arab savagery against other Arabs. The economy of the West Bank is in ruins, and is getting worse because Palestinians formerly employed in the Gulf are now jobless. Arab states that used to place the Palestine question at the top of their diplomatic agendas now have it somewhere near the bottom. Time and demography, which once seemed on the Arabs' side because their birth rates were higher than the Jews', now are on Israel's side because of Soviet immigration. The PLO, once recog-



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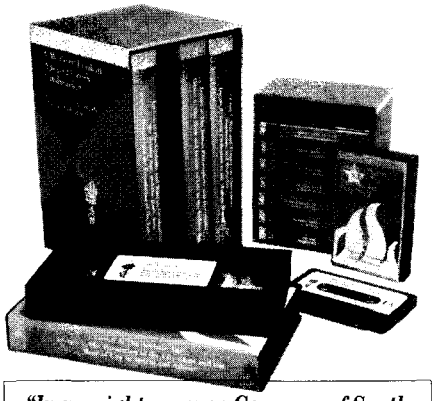

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nized as a power in the world, has been discredited almost everywhere for its support of Saddam Hussein in the Gulf. And it has just been disarmed in Lebanon. The PLO retains only its ability to intimidate concession-minded Palestinians in the territories.

According to scholars such as Elie Kedourie, currently at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, the United States and other outsiders should stop attempting to breathe artificial life into the Palestinian movement and should let Israel and the Palestinians find their own equilibrium. Kedourie thinks that increasing numbers of West Bank Palestinians are willing to defy the PLO, though he is not sure there are yet enough to get useful dialogue started with Israel. In any event, he says, the historic argument for focusing U.S. diplomacy on the Palestinian issue—that it offers an opening for Soviet exploitation—"has fallen to the ground." And Arab radicalism, he says, will always find other causes around which to rally, even if the Palestinian problem were solved.

The administration shares the notion that a new Palestinian leadership may emerge, and wants to intervene to help it by blocking Israeli seizure of more Arab territory. Administration officials agree that the PLO is discredited and the Palestinian population is demoralized, but they say that a Palestinian national movement will continue to exist and the job of the West is to prevent it from being radical (whether Islamic or secular) and causing trouble throughout the Arab world. With the PLO weak and Iraq defeated, the administration thinks that the time is right for a "territory for peace" trade between Israel and the Arabs, but that Israel's "aggressive" settlements policy forecloses that.

At the moment the administration and Israel are like two trains on a collision course over settlements and housing aid. The Israel lobby is gearing up for a fight that's being compared to the one waged in 1981 over the sale of AWACS planes to Saudi Arabia. Israel's government thinks it has the votes in Congress to beat the administration and is reportedly spoiling for a fight, hoping to show the administration how powerful it is. Pro-Israeli members of Congress and most Jewish organizations dislike Israel's settlements policy but can't persuade the Likud government to alter it. Meanwhile, they view housing guarantees for Russian émigrés as vital to Israel's future. Israel's side is ready to accuse the administration of politicizing the humanitarian issue of Jewish immigrant absorption.

On the other end, the administration's Middle East policy-makers also seem to want a fight, although they are looking for creative ways to limit West Bank settlements without directly conditioning housing aid. One option might be to cut overall aid to Israel (not housing money) by the amount the government spends on West Bank settlements. A surprise attempt by Texas Democrat John Bryant to do this on June 19, cutting $82.5 million from aid to Israel, was defeated by a vote of 378-44, but administration officials think this does not represent the true level of hostility to Jewish settlements.

Still, all indications are that the administration would suffer a sound thrashing in direct combat, that Likud hawks would be emboldened by the victory, and that America's Arab allies (whom the policy-makers seem eager to impress) would be dismayed. So, although from Bush on down there is nothing but rage at the Israelis for taking over Arab land, domestic pragmatists in the administration may yet prevail over would-be Mideast peacemakers. White House chief of staff John Sununu, no friend of Israel, is said to be counseling against a battle in Congress. Bush supposedly won't decide what to do for another several weeks, but top aides think he wants a stop to settlements badly enough that some linkage plan will result—and hence a bitter battle with Israel. ●

**Peru battles an epidemic.**

# TIME OF CHOLERA

*By Tina Rosenberg*

LIMA

In early May, as cholera began to spread eastward into Peru's jungle, Health Ministry cholera czar Eduardo Salazar entered the business of motorboat repair. A few days later sixteen old boats, outfitted with new engines, radios, and volunteer doctors from Lima, began to navigate the rivers of Peruvian Amazonia, stopping at each stilt-house hamlet, searching for the sick. The doctors brought their i.v.s, rehydration packets, and tales of bacteria and microbes to people who have never seen an electric bulb and never felt the sensation of cold, who drink river water and the potions of *curanderos*, or shamans.

After five months, cholera is spreading to other countries in Latin America—and a few cases have been seen in the United States. But although cholera is disappearing from Peru for now, it will eventually become endemic, reappearing in weakened form each year. This is cholera's normal course. Truly astonishing, however, is the Peruvian government's success in treating it. Two thousand people have died: less than 1 percent of the roughly 250,000 who got the disease. In the world's last huge epidemic, in West Africa in the early 1970s, the death rate was between 20 and 30 percent.

Cholera has killed 2,000 people, while 40,000 children under 5 die each year from diarrhea in Peru. Yet it is cholera that inspires terror, in part because many Peruvians view the disease—never before seen here—as a metaphor for the country's slide back in



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time from modernity. The more appropriate literary allusion for Peru today is not García Márquez but the book of Exodus: cholera, hunger, earthquake, drought, state terror, garbage, bombings, guerrillas, cocaine, and the blowing up of electrical towers.

Treating cholera has meant bridging the centuries separating the two Perus: the white coastal cities that live precariously in the modern age, and "Peru profundo," the largely rural Indian sierra and jungle where people live as their ancestors did a millennium ago. In 1987 researchers found a benign strain of *Vibrio cholerae* in the water of the Lima slum of Canto Grande. Peru's health infrastructure had broken down to the point where a toxic form of the bacteria could easily spread. On January 23, 1991, the inevitable happened: the first cases of cholera appeared, the bacteria probably brought by a fishing boat from Asia. "This is 'Chronicle of an Epidemic Foretold,' " said Alberto Flórez, head of the Lima-based Pan American Center for Sanitary Engineering.

It would be hard to think of a country worse prepared. Diarrhea and vomiting can kill cholera victims within four hours unless they receive rehydration. But for many in rural Peru, a health clinic is a day's journey on foot, horse, or bicycle, and the clinic is likely to stock only the most rudimentary medicines. The nurse may be there a few hours a day or not at all; in April health workers went on strike to protest their $45 monthly salaries. The streets of downtown Lima are still filled with police turning tear gas and water cannon on striking nurses. Most public hospitals have no medicine, sheets, or food. At Lima's Dos de Mayo hospital in April, I waited two hours for a doctor to arrive at the converted tuberculosis ward, which serves as one of three cholera halls. It was so jammed that men held their i.v. bottles while standing or sitting on benches. "What I'm doing won't solve this problem," said Dr. Julio Ramirez as he checked patients' antibiotic schedules. "The solution is getting water and sewers to people so they can wash."

The cholera bacterium lives in contaminated water and foods; it infects humans unless it is killed by thorough cooking. Cholera is a disease of poverty: practically absent from wealthy neighborhoods, but prevalent among those who do not wash, drink clean water, properly dispose of waste, or eat cooked food. Every control measure requires water, but a smaller percentage of people have water and sewers in Peru than practically anywhere else in the hemisphere.

Mass migration to the cities has stretched urban water systems to the breaking point. Bathrooms are filthy even in the Health Ministry. Women living in straw huts on the bleak sand dunes in the Villa El Salvador shantytown south of Lima said they bought their water from peddlers. The water is foul—some peddlers simply scoop it from rivers—and sits in foul tanks. At $4 for a month's supply, it is so expensive that the average person uses less than four gallons in a day; in the United States the average is 100 gallons.

Conditions in rural Peru are even more propitious for cholera's spread. In some parts of the rural sierra, the only water comes from rivers, and one doctor serves 25,000 residents. Most rural children do not get the necessary vaccines. Unable to see any value in modern medicine, rural Peruvians carry on as they have for centuries. Water that looks clear is good enough to drink; besides, boiled water tastes funny. To many in the sierra, *cólera*—which also means anger in Spanish—is not a disease but the wrath of God, provoked by the killing of animals, to be banished through prayer. Three-day wakes for the dead are an enduring Andean custom: the people who wash the body and clothes of the cholera victim also prepare food for guests, who then get cholera, producing more wakes.

And there are the *curanderos*, healers of choice for many in the jungle and sierra. Patricio Torres, a 78-year-old *curandero* I visited in Peru's south, told me he treated patients with herbs, cards, and animals. "If you have an evil thing in your house, I'll come with a guinea pig. We let the animal go, and he goes right to where the problem is." He also passed animals over a patient's body. "A chicken is good. You pass it over the patient and then kill it and open it up. The sickness will show up as a red stain. It works just like the X-ray a doctor takes."

"Some things, like a skin infection, clear up fine with herbs," said Fulgencio Llasaca, a doctor who had worked in the village of Locumba, where he made friends with the two *curanderos*. "But when I had a seriously ill patient who preferred a *curandero*'s advice, I would take the *curandero* aside and explain the necessary treatment. He would prescribe it and everyone would be satisfied."

To citizens of Peru profundo, the *curandero*'s chicken is the familiar medicine they have used all their lives. It is the doctor's fabulous stories of invisible bugs and magic needles to ward off disease and the goings-on inside the fortresslike hospitals where people go in but never come out that seem like black magic. And yet in fighting cholera, the Health Ministry managed to find the point at which the two Perus intersect, introducing the benefits of the modern state to those left outside for centuries.

Health Ministry officials immediately announced the epidemic (some other Latin countries have tried to cover up their cholera) and have since kept reliable statistics on its progress. This did not sit well with everyone; President Alberto Fujimori and his fisheries minister, concerned about the impact on industry, ate seviche, a traditional raw fish dish, on TV. A jump in new cases followed—possibly including the fisheries minister: *The New York Times* reported rumors that he spent a week in a military hospital with "laryngitis." The agriculture minister went on TV eating unwashed grapes. The health minister, undercut by the government, resigned. His replacement has been less aggressive, but at least the rest of the government, reeling from criticism, is no longer making trouble.



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Health officials from international organizations laud the work of Salazar's cholera team. Foreign donors say their equipment and medicine have gotten to the field undelayed by corruption or bureaucracy. The job was twofold: to reduce the disease's spread by teaching Peruvians about modern hygiene, and to get modern medical attention to the stricken. In both areas the task was compounded by the state's absence from rural Peru.

But ironically, Peru's decay was an asset in fighting cholera. So many babies die of diarrhea that eight years ago UNICEF and the Pan American Health Organization began teaching mothers to make and use rehydration salts. This most effective cholera treatment, then, was already known and accepted. Perhaps more important, the country boasted a network of volunteer health promoters. Thousands of women knocked on their neighbors' doors, giving hands-on reinforcement to the government's educational TV and radio ads. Even the Shining Path guerrillas' graffiti in the mountains admonishes readers to dig latrines and wash their hands.

All over Peru cholera has scared people into adopting health practices they had previously ignored. Villa El Salvador enjoys running water only two or three hours a week, woeful even by Peruvian standards. But through door-to-door visits and seminars for food handlers, the shantytown of 300,000 people, renowned for its political organization, suffered only seven cholera deaths—the second-lowest rate in the country. "In two weeks this epidemic accomplished what years of work couldn't," said Rosario Torres, a doctor in Villa El Salvador. "Women sit down in restaurants and order juice made with boiled water. That never happened before." In the jungle the Health Ministry sent motorboats to collect one woman from each village to attend a three-day course in Iquitos, the regional capital, on cholera prevention and treatment.

The Health Ministry has distributed 2,200 tons of medicines, i.v.s, salts, and plasma among almost every village in Peru, a logistical nightmare even in countries with decent roads, reliable trucks, less corruption, and no strikes. In general, the goods arrived—in trucks, on horseback, by outboard motor. A few bribes to the navy procured a riverboat, which the Health Ministry fitted out with hospital beds and sent through the jungle from Iquitos to the Brazilian border.

Yet some people still could not get treatment in time. In the jungle the death rate has been 8.5 percent; in the sierra, 7.8 percent. These victims died because their government failed them, as it always has. For the government, as well as for ordinary Peruvians, cholera has sparked the beginnings of changes that should have come centuries ago. The consequences of neglect go beyond cholera; it is in Peru profundo where the Shining Path finds an echo in its call to tear down a state that has never brought more than promises and trouble.

Peru's chances of keeping cholera from becoming endemic do not, however, look bright. Investment in water and sewers will be hit by pressure on international lenders such as the World Bank to cut back on loans to the public sector. (The Bush administration is foremost in applying such pressure.) Just as problematic is how to persuade people to keep washing their hands and boiling water when the immediate danger of cholera has passed. The government is beginning an educational campaign on TV and radio with the theme "The Solution to Cholera Is in Your Hands." Health officials have printed a million copies of a series of cleverly written and drawn booklets to teach good hygiene to schoolchildren.

I asked Salazar where cholera has *not* become endemic. Spain, Portugal, and Italy, he said. "And in the Third World?" I asked. He smiled. "This is the fourth world."

The children's booklets are sitting stacked and tied with twine in someone's office. They will be there for some time. Though it is now midwinter, school has yet to begin. Teachers, paid like nurses, are on strike.

TINA ROSENBERG is a visiting fellow at the Overseas Development Council. Her book *Children of Cain* will be published in September by William Morrow.

**Is Clarence a real conservative?**

# DOUBTING THOMAS

*By Gary L. McDowell*

The nomination of Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court has already provoked the predictable racial name-calling. On the eve of President Bush's announcement, the NAACP's Benjamin Hooks warned that if Thomas were the choice, the president was going to face the mother of all confirmation battles. When Thomas was officially nominated, the crescendo increased. "Why nominate a black at all," asked Eleanor Holmes Norton, if he is going to be a conservative? The appointment was "laughable," Harvard law professor Derrick Bell declared: Thomas "doesn't think like a black." Defenders of Thomas in turn accused the attackers of racism.

The real debate, however, is not about race. What the opponents of Clarence Thomas are objecting to is that he does not share Thurgood Marshall's view of the role of the Supreme Court. The true bone of contention here is thus precisely the same as that which arose over the nomination of Robert Bork. It is an argument over the proper role of the Court in American society, and about the nature and extent of judicial power under a written Constitution. The real litmus test for



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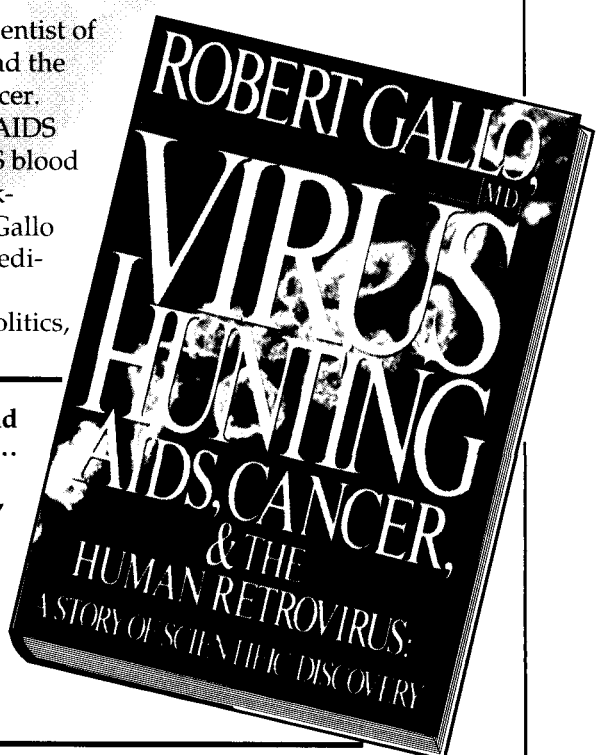


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Thomas (as it was for Bork, Anthony Kennedy, and David Souter) is not race but abortion. Indeed, it is not simply about abortion, but *Roe* v. *Wade* and all that case implies.

*Roe* v. *Wade* is no longer merely a case in constitutional law. It has become a metaphor for contemporary liberalism. At its deepest level *Roe* (along with its progenitor, the 1965 birth control case of *Griswold* v. *Connecticut*) has come to stand for a simple proposition: that it is the proper role of the Supreme Court to divine and declare as binding law rights that are not explicit in the Constitution. This role of the courts, it is suggested, is essential to the protection and perpetuation of individual liberty against the pretensions of governmental power.

To many conservatives, the idea that judicial creation of rights is essential to protect the people against abuses of governmental power ignores one critical fact: judicial power is itself governmental power. As such, it is no less subject to abuse than either the legislative or the executive branch. If the Court is allowed to take its bearings from an "unwritten constitution," or from tenets of what is alleged to be a higher law, then it is elevated above the Constitution itself. Rights and liberties thus understood are entirely in the hands of those who happen to wield judicial power for the moment, as Alexander Bickel understood. The Constitution can get bogged down in fleeting specificities that degrade its status as more than temporary, as Archibald Cox has argued. It ceases to be our "peculiar security," as Thomas Jefferson once described it. Judicial restraint is necessary if constitutional government is to be preserved in any meaningful sense.

In this debate Thurgood Marshall represents the high-water mark of judicial activism in the modern court. But his importance is vastly overrated. In twenty-four years on the Court, he leaves behind him no distinctive body of law. Generally he was content to follow his mentor, William Brennan, siding with him during their twenty-three years together on the Court nearly 90 percent of the time.

In the most notable decisions handed down during his time on the Court, Marshall was usually a silent vote. In such cases as *New York Times* v. *United States* (1971) (the Pentagon Papers case), *Lemon* v. *Kurtzman* (1971) (freedom of religion), and *Roe*, Marshall never added a critical voice. Even in such race-related cases as *Jones* v. *Alfred Mayer* (1968) (restrictive covenants in housing), *Swann* v. *Charlotte-Mecklenburg* (1971) (the school busing case), and *University of California* v. *Bakke* (1978) (racially preferential admissions programs), Marshall's voice was only one of a chorus.

As a justice, Marshall never shaped the law with the same effect he had when he stood before the bar as advocate for the NAACP. The reason is simple: he never ceased to be an advocate—and saw no distinction between advocacy and judgment. As he summed it up in his bitter valedictory dissent in *Payne* v. *Tennessee* (allowing victim impact statements), he always saw the Court primarily as the "protector of the powerless" and always saw himself as the tireless spokesman for "minorities, women, and the indigent." As a result, Justice Marshall traded more in the currency of politics than of law. In cases such as *San Antonio Independent School District* v. *Rodriguez* (1973) (unequal funding for school districts), *Milliken* v. *Bradley* (1974) (cross-district busing to achieve integration), and *Gregg* v. *Georgia* (1976) (a death penalty case), Marshall's dissents were inevitably more concerned with the characteristics of the parties than with such principles as federalism.

The real question now is whether Clarence Thomas is different. Having earned his political stripes in the Reagan administration, Thomas has the appearance to many of his opponents of being no less partisan than Marshall. Although he has at times claimed to be a defender of judicial restraint, at others he has referred to natural law and natural rights, which cannot be found in the Constitution any more than liberals' right to privacy. The question that will have to be resolved for conservatives as much as for liberals in the coming month is: Which sort of conservative is Thomas?

At first blush, he appears to be an exponent of judicial restraint. In one of his relatively few opinions since joining the Court of Appeals, Judge Thomas argued in *Cross-Sound Ferry* v. *ICC* that standing to sue in the federal courts is not an inalienable right; it is a question of jurisdiction, which is a matter of law: "When federal jurisdiction does not exist, federal judges have no authority to exercise it, even if everyone—judges, parties, members of the public—wants the dispute resolved. . . . The truistic constraint on the federal judicial power, then, is this: A federal court may not decide cases when it cannot decide cases, and must determine whether it can, before it may."

This begs an equally important question: Once a court determines that a case properly lies within its jurisdiction, to what materials may a judge have recourse in reaching his decision? Jurisdiction is merely the question of whether *this* court has the power to hear a case. More important is how and what a judge actually decides after a case clears that hurdle. Limiting jurisdiction does not simply preclude judicial activism.

This fact takes on special significance when one considers that Thomas has suggested that a reliance on natural law reasoning may be an appropriate way to interpret the Constitution. That is, of course, just one more way of suggesting that there is an "unwritten constitution" of fundamental rights that both antedates and transcends the written Constitution. "Natural law and higher law arguments," Thomas has written, "are the best defense of liberty and limited government." Such ways of reasoning, he concluded, are "the only alternative to . . . both run-amok majorities and run-amok judges." If he really believes this, then Thomas is a bigger problem for conservatives than he is for liberals.

If this is the core of Thomas's jurisprudence, then his understanding of natural law or higher law confuses



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two very different things. To suggest that the Constitution sprang from and rests upon the natural law teachings of the Declaration of Independence is one thing; but to argue that it is appropriate for judges to claim recourse to that body of law in deciding the cases that come before them is quite a different matter. It accepts the principle that cases are properly decided on the basis of what a judge *thinks* is right or true or just, and are not confined to as literal a reading of the Constitution as possible.

This is not an issue that is new with Thomas. Liberals have used natural law arguments for some time. *Griswold*, Justice Hugo Black—a liberal hero—said in a famous dissent, is as clear a case of natural law reasoning as one can imagine. And the old laissez-faire Court against which Franklin Roosevelt waged his battle did much the same thing. The difference is that where contemporary liberals seek to protect personal rights, yesterday's conservatives—more appropriately called economic libertarians—imported concepts of natural law to secure property rights. *Lochner* v. *New York* (1905), the case striking down New York's laws regulating the hours bakers could work, established the extraconstitutional doctrine of "liberty of contract." That theory was as constitutionally illegitimate as the "right to privacy" created by *Griswold*.

The debate actually goes all the way back to the founding generation itself. In a case in 1798, two founders, James Iredell and Samuel Chase, crossed rhetorical swords over the question of whether the Court could invalidate legislation simply on the basis of natural justice. Justice Chase insisted it could; Justice Iredell denied the claim. And for those who favor maximum judicial restraint, no one has yet successfully answered Justice Iredell's powerful objection to using natural law as a tool of judicial power. "The ideas of natural justice," he explained, "are regulated by no fixed standard: the ablest and the purest men have differed upon the subject."

Justice Joseph Story repeatedly made the same argument. Allowing courts an "unbounded jurisdiction" to control, correct, moderate, or supersede law by "enforcing all the rights as well as charities, arising from natural law and justice," Story noted, would be to establish "the most formidable instrument of arbitrary power that could well be devised." To grant courts such power, Story concluded, would "literally place the whole rights and property of the community under the arbitrary will of the judge . . . according to his own notions and conscience; but still acting with a despotic and sovereign authority."

Story pointed out that constitutions "are not designed for metaphysical or logical subtleties, for niceties of expression, for critical propriety, for elaborate shades of meaning, or for the exercise of philosophical acuteness or judicial research." They are far more modest instruments than that. Story said: "The people make them; the people adopt them; the people must be supposed to read them, with the help of common sense; and cannot be presumed to admit in them any recondite meaning or any extraordinary gloss."

Justice Benjamin Curtis, dissenting in the shadows cast by his Court's majority in *Dred Scott* v. *Sandford* (1857), which legitimated slavery as an unenumerated "vested" interest, decried the same tendency. "When a strict interpretation of the Constitution, according to the fixed rules which govern the interpretation of laws, is abandoned," Curtis declared, "and the theoretical opinions of individuals are allowed to control its meaning, we have no longer a Constitution; we are under the government of individual men, who for the time being have power to declare what the Constitution is, according to their own views of what it ought to mean."

If by his comments on natural law Judge Thomas means only that he believes that American politics is enhanced by arguments that take their point of departure from first principles, and that the place for considerations of natural law and natural justice is in the legislative formulation of laws rather than in their judicial interpretations, then he would be in full agreement with the likes of Iredell, Story, and Curtis. But if he truly believes otherwise, then he will be nothing more on the Court than a conservative Thurgood Marshall, willing to trim and fold the Constitution to fit his own moral judgments. He would be an activist of the most unrestrained sort—not unlike Marshall.

Thus the Thomas nomination comes fraught with dangers for liberals and conservatives alike. If the liberals defeat him, they may wind up with worse; if the conservatives refuse to examine him closely and critically, they may soon realize they could have found someone better. George Bush has done it again.

GARY L. MCDOWELL is the Bradley Visiting Scholar at Harvard Law School.

**John Sununu, WASP wannabe.**

# THE GENIUS

*By Sidney Blumenthal*

Of all the many positions, achievements, and honors that have accrued to John Sununu, perhaps the one of which he is most proud is his terrifyingly high IQ score. His score, which he discovered after mailing in a test he found in *Omni* magazine, is 180. It is only a number, a quantified representation of an arbitrary test, but by such clinical standards he has been certified as nothing less than a genius. He has even enrolled himself in the elite ranks of Mensa, an exclusive club whose



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requirement is precisely the prohibitive IQ score.

As the White House chief of staff, Sununu has gloried in exhibitions of his superior intellect. He demands more than deference to his brilliance in the arena beyond Mensa; he needs servility. He has never hesitated to deny the implorings for small favors from mere Cabinet secretaries or to dismiss lowly senators cavalierly for their uninformed opinions. "Insignificant," he publicly remarked about an important Republican senator. "Fucking little rogue!" he shouted at a reporter. "I'll chainsaw your balls off!" he yelled at the president of the Chamber of Commerce. "I don't care what you're saying! I'm not interested in anything you have to say!" he screamed at a congressman.

Sununu's debating style has included slamming books on tables and phones on their hooks. He has thrown objects across rooms accompanied by a hail of obscene threats. In a calmer mood, he has propped up his feet directly in the faces of senators. He is desperately, compulsively obsessed with the question of humiliation. His self-esteem seems to require ripping down others'. It is not enough that they be proved wrong; he must also show his contempt. He does, after all, have a higher IQ.

Sununu gave the telltale clue to his true ambition at the press conference where his appointment as chief of staff was announced by the president-elect. "All of us have our own styles," Sununu said. His model, he explained, would be neither Dick Cheney, who had served Gerald Ford, nor James Baker, who served Ronald Reagan. It was a long-forgotten figure who loomed largest in Sununu's mind, Sherman Adams.

The choice of Adams as a lodestar for one's Washington career might have seemed peculiar. Adams, who had been Dwight Eisenhower's chief of staff, departed in disgrace, trailing scandal behind him. In fact, Adams was the first to hold the position of chief of staff—a new slot for the former general attempting to re-create the military chain of command. Adams quickly became known as "the abominable no-man." His job was to deliver unpleasant news, which he did in an abruptly unpleasant way. Eventually it was revealed that he had accepted a vicuña coat and other favors from Bernard Goldfine, a Boston industrialist. "I need him," pleaded Ike. But Adams had to resign, though he was never prosecuted. He left Washington having alienated almost everyone.

Why did Sununu openly fit himself with Adams's soiled image? It's true that some of the political parallels between the two are striking. Adams had been the governor of New Hampshire, who aligned himself early with Eisenhower's presidential ambitions. In the primary his support was instrumental in defeating the leader of the GOP's traditionalist congressional wing, Senator Robert Taft. "What settled matters," wrote the journalist Richard Rovere, "was not Eisenhower's popularity but Sherman Adams's decision." Becoming chief of staff was his reward.

Sununu too, of course, was governor of New Hampshire, and his backing of George Bush against the congressional leader, Senator Robert Dole, was decisive in the primary. Sununu had a sense of history about all this. Immediately after Bush's victory, Sununu ordered new licence plates, embossed with the same number that Adams had had when he was chief of staff. Soon Sununu had more than just the same number.

Beyond these startling parallels, however, Adams appears to represent something more for Sununu. Sununu's striving for superiority is among the strangest cases of attempted assimilation through politics into the highest reaches of WASPdom. He is the New England ethnic aspiring to become the Yankee. By seeking to be judged by his forbidding intelligence (certainly not by his grotesque manners), Sununu has tried to transcend his background. He has used meritocratic means to grasp privileged ends. Intelligence, in his scheme, was to substitute for old money, doing the work of generations in an instant. But no matter how grandiloquent his title or how many airplanes and limousines he may commandeer, Sununu can never gain entry as a peer into George Bush's House of Lords.

It is not just the positions that Adams held that have enthralled his successor, but his status in the closed world of the Granite State. New Hampshire is the kingdom of the Yankees. And their party—their cultural center—is the Republican Party. All those who are not Yankees in politics are made keenly aware of their deficiency. Even now Democrats are tainted as representing the lower orders, somehow corrupt, suspiciously Catholic. Until the late 1970s, when the high-tech boom began spilling over the Massachusetts border into southern New Hampshire, the solidly Yankee north country controlled the voting. The Democrats might always take the city of Manchester, but statewide they were still disadvantaged.

Sherman Adams was a Yankee of Yankees, a personification of the philosophy of New England Republicanism. He was a Calvinist (after John Calvin *and* Calvin Coolidge), an upholder of hard work, low taxes, and small government. He was laconic, stern, and, before he turned up in a vicuña coat, an exemplar of rectitude. Adams stood for the old virtues of the old GOP.

From the beginning, John Sununu was an "outlander," born in Havana to a Lebanese-Greek mother and a Lebanese-American father, who distributed French movies. He grew up in Queens but rose by dint of sheer applied intelligence, acquiring an advanced degree in engineering from MIT. From Massachusetts he moved northward again, this time to a place where he was regarded as an alien. Sununu's name and origins were widely ridiculed. ("Sununu" is a colloquial Arabic word for a small bird.) "It's hard to learn, but once you do it's hard to forget," he said. In 1980, the best Republican year in a generation, he ran unsuccessfully for the U.S. Senate. The headline on his campaign bro-



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chure read: "What's Sununu?" In all, he lost three statewide races before winning the governorship. In 1984 he made an effort to get President Reagan to appoint him secretary of energy, but failed. His allies were the cocksure new money entrepreneurs. His political enemies included the old Yankees, particularly former Governor Hugh Gregg, a friend of George Bush's, and his son, Judd Gregg, who succeeded Sununu as governor.

The presidential campaign of 1988 presented Sununu with extraordinary opportunities. Bush's career hung in the balance when he arrived in New Hampshire, having finished third in the Iowa caucuses and lagging behind Dole in the polls. Sununu vaulted to political preeminence above all the local Yankees by saving the Yankee candidate. George Bush, the squire of Kennebunkport, Maine, was virtually a native of the north country. By association, Sununu might make more than a political leap. Then, in helping to savage Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis, Sununu was doing more than making a dutiful, partisan contribution. He was destroying his neighboring rival, another ethnic pretender to the Yankee mantle.

JOHN SUNUNU BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Conferring the high White House position on Sununu, however, did not make him a Sherman Adams. Sununu may have thought that he was escaping the cultural pressures of New Hampshire—the problems of a striving ethnic among censorious WASPs—but he had simply locked himself airtight in the conundrum. The large, thickly carpeted corner office in the West Wing and the platoon of intimidated aides at his beck and call were the trappings of his subordination, which he mistook for absolute power.

Sununu was elevated in great part because of Bush's defective understanding of politics. Politics, to Bush, is the dirty business that must be done in order to perform the public service, whatever that might be. The political arena is fraught with vulgar characters who do not play by gentlemanly rules, especially Democrats lurking in the alleys. To deal with them, Bush has always employed someone to do the dirty work, typically a non-Yankee. In his 1988 campaign, he had Lee Atwater and Roger Ailes. In the presidency, he had hired John Sununu to sweat for him. The role of the ethnic who does the heavy lifting for the WASP could not be more traditional. In the meantime the top Cabinet titles were almost entirely bestowed on those of Bush's estate.

Sununu's militant conservatism only further marked him off. For Bush ideology does not connote a [illegible]view, or a set of principles. It is something somewhat unsavory that one must be able to manipulate nowadays (unlike yesterday, when his father was elected to the Senate). Ideology is a tool; it has nothing to do with public service. And those who don't see it that way merely reveal how far they still have to go. Thus, the more useful Sununu has made himself as Bush's conservative, the more he has closed himself off from the status he craves.

Perhaps, in his conspicuous consumption of perquisites, Sununu was trying to climb a social ladder whose top rung was out of his reach. He did not seem to understand that the WASP who assiduously guards his privileges also shows his class by appearing blithely indifferent to them. Instead, when Sununu's peccadilloes were exposed, he flew into a rage. Now he tested more than Bush's patience. He was supposed to be the president's thick skin, but his own was paper-thin. His self-seeking had put Bush's famous loyalty on trial. When Sununu sought to blame the Jews for creating the story in order to even the score with a Lebanese who has been notably unsympathetic toward Israel, he threw himself into a simmering ethnic caldron.

What is Bush to do? Sununu was already making ambitious plans when the scandal crashed in on him. He had entertained thoughts of running again for the Senate. It was reported that members of his staff were assigned to research whether his foreign birth could be



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finessed so that he could be qualified to run for president. As he jetted above it all, Sununu daydreamed about himself in the Oval Office.

Sununu may yet avoid the same bad political end as his idol. Up to a point, it may serve Bush's purposes more to have him stay than leave. Sununu's disgrace may still make him useful to his master in performing the unpleasant. To that extent, his tainted image will be more indelible. He will never be able to bleach it out of his billowing white shirts.

Ultimately, Sununu has been betrayed neither by the media nor by the Jews, but by his total faith in his IQ. It could not provide him with an insight powerful enough to restrain the social ambition that demanded reckless vehicular upgrading. His cool reason was never a match for his blazing emotions. John Sununu has been thwarted by his overheated desire from ascending to the caste that bred Sherman Adams—and George Bush. ●

**Downsizing the 'third way.'**

# SWEDEN SOUR?

## *By Steven Kelman*

STOCKHOLM

The signs of decline are subtle. In the once-futuristic subway system, for example, litter isn't swept away quite as quickly, and occasional graffiti disfigure passenger seats. But the stairs to the stations are still furnished with special rails that allow parents to glide their baby carriages down the steps. On the streets, at major intersections, staccato bursts still sound to make it easier for blind pedestrians to know when it's all right to cross. And police officers walking the streets downtown still often give citizens a salute when responding to requests for information.

Ever since Marquis Childs wrote *Sweden: The Middle Way* in 1936, American liberals have been stuck on Sweden. Rational and humane, free of slums and violence, with bountiful social benefits and enlightened employers and unions, Sweden appeared to have it all. Swedes loved being praised as the "conscience of the world"—an accolade sometimes bestowed ironically, given the Swedish penchant for anti-Americanism and infatuation with Third World revolutionaries.

Now Sweden is in trouble. Over the past year or so a spate of articles has appeared in the American press heralding its economic demise, the result, they suggest, of high taxes and an excessively generous welfare state. The articles cite the same figures: marginal tax rates of 80 percent for people with moderately high incomes, a sales tax of 25 percent, and sickness-related job absenteeism averaging a staggering twenty-five days a year. Inflation was 10 percent last year, the highest in the Western world. And industrial production declined by 2.5 percent, one of the worst records as well.

Sweden's complacency has been shattered in the realm of culture and values as well. Its self-image as an island of reason, justice, and calm began unraveling the night of Friday, February 29, 1986, when Prime Minister Olof Palme, head of Sweden's long-ruling Social Democratic Party, was assassinated in downtown Stockholm while he and his wife were strolling home from the movies. The assassination and its aftermath shook Swedes' assumptions about their own efficiency and honesty. In a country with the highest percentage of solved murders in the world, the Palme case is still open. The investigative trail led to an alcoholic drifter in 1989, but the evidence was flimsy, and the conviction was unanimously overturned on appeal. Worse, it came to light that some people in the government, not fully trusting the investigation team, had secretly authorized a private investigation, complete with illegal bugging carried out by a trusted Social Democratic Party activist and publisher.

Meanwhile, Bofors, an important Swedish arms manufacturer, was discovered to have shipped weapons, in contravention of Swedish law, to potential belligerents in the Middle East. Suggestions were made that Palme himself might have known something about Bofors bribes in connection with a multibillion-dollar arms sale to India. And last January the heads of two major Swedish unions, on a solidarity visit to Estonia, were murdered while consorting with prostitutes.

Finally, the fall of communism has produced a sense of disorientation. "For decades," notes Klas Eklund, a former Trotskyist who is now one of the intellectual leaders of the Social Democratic Party's right wing, "we saw ourselves as the third way, between the poles of laissez-faire capitalism and totalitarian communism. What do you do when one of the poles collapses?"

All this has taken its toll on the political fortunes of

STEVEN KELMAN is professor of public policy at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government.



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Sweden's Social Democrats, who have governed continually since 1932 (except for the years 1976-82). During 1989 the Social Democrats lost ten points in opinion polls, an unprecedented drop in a country with strong party loyalties. In the most recent surveys they're down to 30 percent, the lowest since the 1920s. Meanwhile, the Conservatives are up to 20 percent in the polls. The Christian Democratic Party, a splinter group promoting "traditional values" that has never gotten the 4 percent of the vote necessary to be represented in Parliament, is scoring over 11 percent. And a few months ago two political neophytes—an amusement park operator and a businessman of noble lineage who wrote a book last year on what's wrong with Sweden—started a party of their own, New Democracy, which one observer describes as having a program of "conservative politics and cheap liquor." New Democracy is running at over 9 percent in the polls. There's a general election in September, and everyone expects the Social Democrats to lose.

The question for Sweden is no longer whether the country needs to change but how radical the change must be. One view is that Sweden must apologize for everything that has come before and return to the free market fold—a view implied in many of the articles in the American press and held by some Swedes as well. But another view, which may turn out to be closer to the mark, is that Sweden can overcome its problems while still holding on to important parts of the Swedish model—namely its special dedication to humanitarian values. Essentially, Swedish exceptionalism would not be abandoned, simply downsized.

For a century beginning in the 1870s, Sweden had one of the fastest rates of economic growth in the world. Its prosperity expanded outward from logging and mining, and its relative economic equality, which promoted broad consumer demand, helped it develop appliance and automobile industries. The small home market meant that Swedish firms learned early to export to foreign markets. Growth was especially rapid between 1950 and 1970—a time Swedes nostalgically call "the record years"—aided by unions that were unusually willing to accept technological change and by government policies that retrained workers to move from dying to expanding industries.

But public policy changed between 1965 and 1980. As late as 1960, after the maturing of Sweden's advanced welfare state, the percentage of Sweden's GNP in the public sector was still basically the same as in the United States, about 30 percent. By 1980 that figure had grown to about 60 percent of GNP, the highest in the West. The money went into beefing up existing programs, such as national health insurance, housing subsidies, and child allowances; into liberalizing benefit formulas for programs such as sickness pay, workmen's compensation, and disability pensions; and into new programs, particularly government-paid parental leave, now eighteen months for each child, and day-care subsidies.

By the late '70s ordinary working Swedes found themselves in a 50 percent marginal tax bracket, and individuals with taxable incomes above $55,000 (Sweden does not allow joint filing by married couples) in marginal tax brackets of 80 percent. High taxes prompted some homegrown companies to uproot: two of the most successful Swedish startups of recent times, the packaging manufacturer TetraPak (which gave the world the juice box) and the furniture retailer IKEA, moved their corporate headquarters out of Sweden. High marginal tax rates also spurred inflation, because workers had to negotiate big wage increases to get small growth in after-tax pay, and encouraged consumers to borrow heavily and spend beyond their means, since interest payments were deductible.

But changes in the world economy would have created economic problems for Sweden even if Milton Friedman had been prime minister. In the '70s some important heavy industries—particularly shipbuilding and steel—had become uncompetitive at anything approaching Swedish wage levels. The non-socialist government in power between 1976 and 1982 spent billions in direct subsidies trying (and failing) to prop up these industries, driving the Swedish budget deficit to a high of 10 percent of GNP—far higher than the worst U.S. deficits. In the car industry, which remains central to the economy, Volvo and Saab are now facing increased competition from Japanese luxury cars. In addition, although many of the large Swedish multinationals have not only 90 percent or so of their sales but also up to 80 percent of their production outside Sweden, this has more to do with the pull of foreign markets than with any push away from Sweden. Swedes were always sensitive to the customized demands of their overseas customers, but they have increasingly discovered that being really sensitive means being really close. And being really close means being there, not in Sweden.

What's more, some of the horror stories about Sweden's economy turn out to be a little deceptive. In fact, Swedish growth rates over the past two decades have not been much worse than those of other countries that were, like Sweden, the richest in the world in 1970 (such as the United States, Germany, and Switzerland). And Swedish unemployment stayed at or under 2 percent throughout the 1980s, when unemployment rates elsewhere in Europe were often as high as 10 percent. It is true that absences in Swedish workplaces suspiciously rise during, for example, World Cup soccer matches. Even so, the figure of twenty-five sick days a year is misleading: most of it is accounted for by long-term illness, which in the United States would be counted as long-term disability. The average number of sick days for illnesses lasting five days or less is 4.5 days. As for taxes, interest and other deductions always meant that people's real tax rates were lower than the ones cited in the newspaper articles; when the top marginal tax rate was 80 percent, only 2 percent of taxpayers actually paid that rate.



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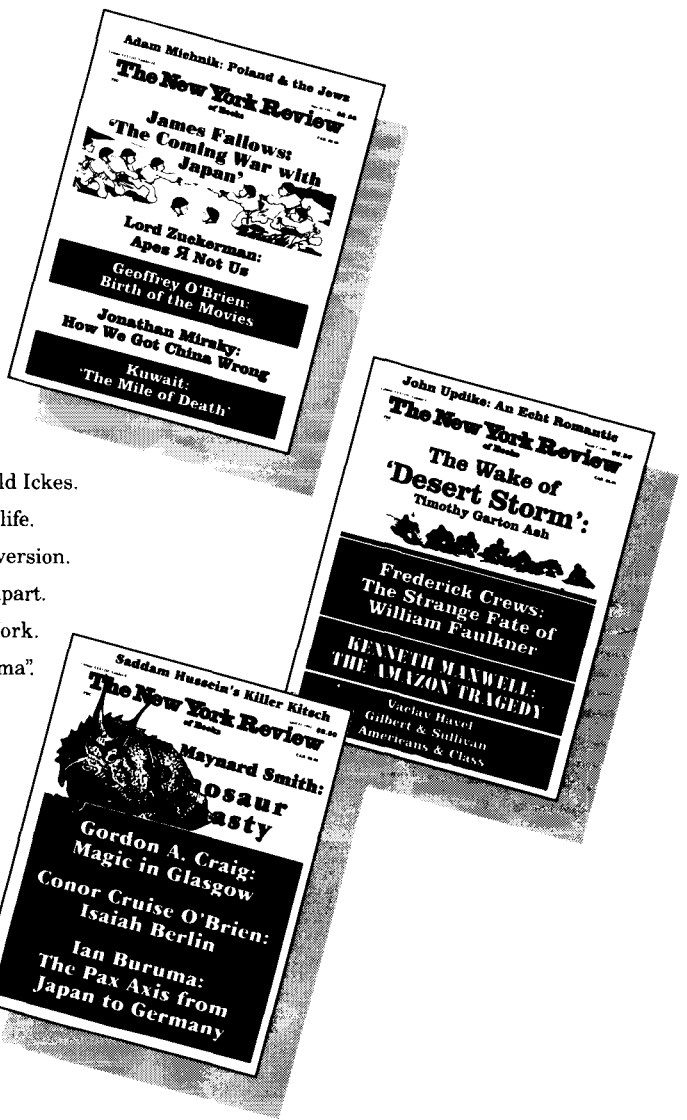
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Also contrary to the apocalypse now view, Sweden's economy actually has a number of things going for it. Its export-oriented companies are tough competitors. The big Sweden-based multinationals still do about 90 percent of their R&D work in Sweden. Swedish-based companies still have good market positions in telephone equipment, pharmaceuticals, appliances, construction equipment, and electrical generating equipment. And although union-management relations have soured in recent years at the national level, compared with the spirit of cooperation for which Sweden was famous from the 1930s through the 1960s, company-level relations are still excellent.

Sweden's ability to bounce back from its troubles without completely capitulating on Swedish values turns heavily on two sources of cultural strength. One has been the willingness of the Social Democrats themselves to adapt and change. The other is the resilience of national pride that encourages Swedes to fight back against despair and resignation.

Over the past several years, the Social Democrats have modified policy after policy that was hurting economic growth. When they returned to power in 1982 they promptly cut back subsidies to declining industries, which slashed the huge budget deficits and led to a decline of public spending as a proportion of GNP from a peak of almost 67 percent to around 60 percent. They also quit defending every social welfare benefit and government program. They stopped objecting to the idea that local governments might contract out services such as garbage collection, snow removal, or cleaning public buildings. In fields such as education and health, the party now talks about "freedom of choice within the public sector," meaning that while services should still be paid for and produced by government, citizens should be able to choose which day-care center, health facility, or public school they wish to use, rather than having the government assign people.

The Social Democrats have also finally come to accept that marginal tax rates were too high. This year they implemented a major tax reform, openly borrowed from the 1986 American tax reform idea that rates should be lowered and the tax base broadened. For individual taxable incomes above about $35,000 a year, the top marginal rate, including local taxes, was cut from 75 percent to 50 percent. The marginal rate for almost all taxpayers will decline to 30 percent. At the same time, to keep the reform revenue-neutral, the government has reduced the deduction for interest payments, eliminated some popular deductions (such as the lunch vouchers that employers gave out as a tax-free benefit), and extended the 25 percent sales tax to services such as taxi rides, air and rail tickets, and visits to hairdressers.

Benefit reductions that a few years ago were unmentionable among Social Democrats now become official policy with amazing dispatch. For example, last fall the government announced it would lower sickness pay from the previous unlimited full compensation to 75 percent of salary for the first three days and 90 percent afterward. The government has also announced major cutbacks in subsidies and in tariff protection for Swedish farmers. From private conversations with leading Social Democrats, it's clear that there is growing sentiment to cut back on housing subsidies and workmen's compensation. In a recent article, a member of the prime minister's staff even suggested introducing fees for attending public schools.

The Social Democrats have been breaking with the past on foreign policy as well. Saying that the changes in Eastern Europe had reduced the importance of Swedish neutrality, the government announced last fall that Sweden would seek admission to the European Community. Third Worldism has just about vanished as well. There was essentially no sympathy in Sweden for Saddam Hussein's march into Kuwait. The criticism of American policy that did emanate from some Social Democrats had more the character of "we must avoid unnecessary bloodshed" than of "we must stop the latest depredation of U.S. imperialism."

The Social Democrats will still lose the election. But by showing that they are capable of learning and changing, they have helped restore Sweden's confidence that it can adjust successfully to the new economic realities. And the party's willingness to change makes it easier for a non-Socialist government to make reforms without the social tensions that would occur if the opposition fought its every move.

The second source of strength for Sweden is that, after a decade of scandals and economic woes that has dealt heavy blows to Swedish amour propre, a pride in being Swedish is returning. I've asked a number of Swedes whether they'd like to have been born somewhere else, unshackled by the Swedish language and Swedish taxes. No, most protested, there were attractive features to being Swedish, especially the closeness to nature and the reasonable tone in human interaction. "In the end, we want to come home," a corporate executive with twenty-eight years' experience outside Sweden told me. "It's the red cottage in the countryside, the green meadows. It makes us feel very secure to be on Swedish earth." And in spite of everything, most Swedes, including most non-Social Democrats, are proud of Sweden's welfare-state institutions.

One sign of the new nationalism is the incredible success of a series of secret agent novels about a bizarre figure with the code name Coq Rouge, who rescues Swedish hostages in the Middle East, breaks up a league of German terrorists, blows up a Soviet submarine in Swedish waters, and kills a Swede who had been spying for the Soviet Union. Yet Coq Rouge is no ordinary James Bond. He is a former Maoist and is still self-consciously egalitarian. He also works together with the PLO and uncovers Israeli intelligence agents who had murdered a Swedish police officer. The success of Coq Rouge—each novel having sold in Sweden the equivalent of 18 million copies in the United



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States—reflects a new willingness to be aggressively proud about standing up for Sweden. But it also reflects a view of what one should be proud to stand up for, a view that has large elements of traditional Swedish values mixed into it.

Thus, what seems to be emerging here is a new and more modest version of the old exceptionalism. The modified "Swedish way" retains some of the old pride in Sweden's egalitarian social innovations, minus the grandiose delusion that Sweden has all the answers. In a world of increasing international trade, Sweden will inevitably be disadvantaged by its remote location and the small size of its home market. In practical terms this means that Swedes will need to accept somewhat lower incomes to compensate investors for locating there. There is no reason this cannot be done while maintaining a commitment to the basics of Sweden's humanitarian values, with labor-management cooperation at the workplace providing a particularly Swedish source of economic advantage. Properly downsized, the Swedish model can indeed survive. ●

**How to bear America's New World Burden.**

# THE LONELY SUPERPOWER

*By Charles Krauthammer*

A Marxist-led rebel coalition overthrows a Soviet satellite regime in Ethiopia. Whom do both sides call upon to mediate, to arrange terms of the rebel takeover, and to support the new government? The United States. Boris Yeltsin becomes the first freely elected leader of Russia in 1,000 years. What is his first destination? Washington. Chinese students, Kurdish rebels, Bangladeshi disaster victims seek aid and succor. To whom do they turn? America.

We live in a unipolar world. The old bipolar world of the cold war has not given birth to the multipolar world that many had predicted and some insist exists today. It has given birth to a highly unusual world structure with a single power, the United States, at the apex of the international system. Multipolarity will come in time. But it is decades away. Germany and Japan were to be the pillars of the new multipolar world. Their paralysis in the face of the Gulf crisis was dramatic demonstration that economic power does not inevitably translate into geopolitical power. As for the other potential pillar, "Europe," its disarray in response to the Gulf crisis made clear that as an international player it does not yet exist.

We have today no lack of second-rank powers. Germany and Japan are obvious economic powers. Britain and France are able to deploy diplomatic and, in some cases, military assets around the world. The Soviet Union possesses several elements of power—military, diplomatic, and political—but all are in rapid decline. There is no prospect in the immediate future of any power to rival the United States. This situation is almost unknown in the history of the modern nation-state: 1815 and 1945 come to mind, but even then the preeminent power was faced with at least one rival of roughly equal strength.

The world's unipolarity became blindingly clear this year when, with a prodigious act of will, the United States turned history in the Arabian peninsula. But the new structure of the international order has nothing to do with the Persian Gulf. It is a direct result of the collapse of the Soviet empire. One might place the birth of the unipolar world at Stavropol last July where, at the Kohl-Gorbachev summit, the Soviet Union ceded to NATO the jewel of its European empire, East Germany.

The end of the cold war changed the structure of the world. The Gulf war merely revealed it. And in doing so it exploded two myths about the current international system. Some have misinterpreted the war as reinforcing the first myth, the myth of multilateralism. That victory is said to be an example of a new era of collective security, of the indispensability of coalition politics, of the resurgence of the U.N. This is pious nonsense. The Gulf war was an example of pseudo-multilateralism. The United States recruited a ship here, rented a brigade there, bought (with skillfully deployed sticks and carrots) the necessary U.N. resolutions to give its actions a multilateral sheen. The Gulf was no more a collective action than was Korea, still the classic case of pseudo-multilateralism.

The only people who willingly acknowledge today's pseudo-multilateralism are those rather indisposed to the United States. Former French Defense Minister Jean-Pierre Chevenement (forced to resign because of

This article is adapted from a recent address at Harvard University.



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his pro-Iraqi sentiments) charges that the United States has never considered the Security Council anything other than "a blessing and a guarantee for its own actions." But of course. Would not any great power? Would not France if given the chance?

But Americans insist on the multilateral pretense. A large segment of American opinion doubts the legitimacy of unilateral American action, but accepts action taken under the rubric of the "world community." Why it should matter to Americans that their actions receive the Security Council blessing of Deng Xiaoping and the butchers of Tiananmen Square is a mystery to me. But to many Americans it matters. It is thus largely for domestic reasons that American political leaders make sure to dress up unilateral action in multilateral clothing. The danger, of course, is that they may ultimately come to believe their own pretense.

The second myth most recently exploded is the myth of American decline. Before the Gulf crisis American declinists were lamenting America's fall from its perch atop the world in—their favorite benchmark year—1950. Well, in 1950 the United States engaged in a war with North Korea. It lasted three years, cost 54,000 American lives, and ended in a draw. Forty-one years later the United States engaged in a war with Iraq, a country of comparable size. It lasted six weeks, cost 143 American lives, and ended in a rout. If the Roman empire had declined at that rate, you would be reading this in Latin.

But, say the declinists, you cannot compare the two wars. In Korea, did not the United States have to contend with China as well as North Korea? That is precisely the point. In the 1950s our adversaries had strategic depth. They had the whole Communist world behind them. That is why we were not able to prevail in Vietnam and Korea. In 1991, with the cold war won, our great adversaries are in retreat. The enemies we do encounter today, like Saddam, have to face us on their own. Because of that, they don't stand a chance. The difference between Korea and Iraq lies in the fact that in the interim the cold war was won and the world became unipolar.

Now, the response of Americans to this extraordinary state of international affairs is decidedly unenthusiastic. Americans do not enjoy their hegemony. They can rouse themselves for a one-day parade to celebrate the most lopsided military victory since Agincourt, but even that merriment, which elicited considerable editorial grumbling about hubris and expense, seemed a bit forced. Of all the great imperial powers, America is probably the least imperially minded. Britain and France, at their height, would have stayed in the Gulf after such an extraordinary military victory to rearrange the map and establish themselves as hegemons. The United States, in contrast, could not wait to get out and go home.

That is the American way. Hence our evacuation of Europe after World War I and our mass demobilization after World War II. Americans are endlessly resourceful in trying to escape the responsibilities that history has placed on their shoulders. The most notable example, of course, is the isolationism of the '20s and the '30s. But even during the years of cold war engagement, a significant element, sometimes a majority, of the American intelligentsia counseled abdication. Indeed, for years, until the revolutions of '89, "cold warrior" was a term of abuse.

When the cold war was won the first response was euphoria, coupled with the demand for a "peace dividend," i.e., unilateral disarmament. Having won the latest war to end all wars, there were calls in Congress for huge and immediate cuts, up to 50 percent, in defense expenditures. The mood was best caught at a press conference at the White House early last year when a celebrated correspondent, disturbed by the president's "out of sync" $300 billion defense budget, asked Bush skeptically, "Who is the enemy?"

Six months later we got our answer. It took Saddam to remind us that the world is a nasty place, even without the Soviet threat. Americans do not appreciate the reminder. Hence the determined search for evasions to escape our superpower responsibilities.

There are two principal modes of evasion. The first, on the rise before the Gulf war, and now in embarrassed but only temporary retreat, is old-style isolationism. With the end of the cold war, native American isolationism, always a powerful political undercurrent, is beginning to reassert itself openly. This neoisolationism, like its interwar forebear, has two factions. The more well known, left isolationism, is a child of Vietnam. The newer phenomenon (for this generation) is right isolationism, which has its roots in the '20s and '30s but which took a holiday during the cold war when it gave itself over to a passionate anti-communism. The holiday is over. The return of right isolationism as a respected intellectual stance might be dated to Russell Kirk's notorious Heritage Foundation speech (October 1988) attacking neoconservatives, which included a thrust at their "fanciful democratic globalism." Pat Buchanan has followed up in the popular press, leading the charge for a foreign policy of "America first" and declaring, "When this cold war is over, America should come home."

"America first" is a deliberate echo of a right-wing isolationist slogan of the '30s. "Come home America" is a deliberate echo of McGovern's anti-Vietnam slogan of 1972. This overt borrowing is a clear sign that left and right strains of isolationism will produce alliances that will confound ideological distinctions. It is true that left isolationism refuses to engage the world because it fears that America will corrupt the world, whereas right isolationism refuses to engage the world because it fears that the world will corrupt America. But as the Soviet threat recedes into history, ideological lines among isolationists will blur. Conservatism, however, will be isolationism's great new growth area. After all, on the left, those who were propelled toward isolationism by Vietnam (much of the Democratic Party) are already there. New converts to isolationism will come from the right, now



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that the anti-Communist emergency is over.

Isolationism is the first and the most obvious means of escape from the burdens of the new world order. The other, more subtle, means is multilateralism. Rather than say, Come home America, the multilateralist says, Stay engaged but let someone else do the real work. That someone else is the Organization of American States, collective security, the Security Council, or some other multilateral invention. Let them police the world. We want out.

Multilateralism is fine. It provides cover for what are essentially unilateral American actions. But it carries two dangers. The first is that we will mistake the illusion—world opinion, U.N. resolutions, professions of solidarity—for the real thing, which is American power. And that we will assume that if we dispense with the real thing, the illusion will get us where we mean to go. It will not.

The second danger is that multilateralism will become a fetish. If it becomes an end in itself, the need to nurture it can become a hindrance to the exercise of real power. Before the war, for example, many in Congress argued against undertaking any military actions on the grounds (among others) that it might jeopardize the grand coalition that the president had assembled. But the whole point of the coalition was to get Iraq out of Kuwait. If the coalition stood in the way of that end, it had to yield. To do otherwise would be to confuse ends and means.

The ultimate problem with multilateralism is that if you take it seriously you gratuitously forfeit American freedom of action. You invite China and the Soviet Union, countries indifferent when not hostile to our interests, to have a decisive say and even a veto over our interests and those of our friends. Why should the preeminent power on the globe invite such a needless constraint on its action?

Multilateralism is the isolationism of the internationalist. Those who would like to appear internationalist but have tired of real engagement know that if they tie themselves up in enough coalitions and international structures they will quite effectively be taken out of the game. And that, of course, is the point.

But both the multilateral dodge and the isolationist abdication are no answer to the dilemmas of a unipolar world. There is no escape. If we want stability and tranquillity in the world, we will have to work for it, impose it, sometimes on our own. It will not come as a gift from the Security Council. It will not come of itself. It will come only from an America working to shape a new world order.

The phrase "new world order" is George Bush's. He likes it so much that, since last August, he has been using it constantly. He would like New World Order to be as much his legacy as New Deal is FDR's. What exactly is it? The departed Minister Chevenement charges that the only thing new about the new world order is that it is an American order. Right again. If the new world order means anything (as yet, not a certain proposition) it is as an assertion of American interests and values in the world.

What interest and what values? Here we can see contradictory strains developing within the administration itself. One vision of the NWO, a conservative vision, was offered by the president on April 13 in a speech at Maxwell Air Force Base. For the first time Bush set out the principal elements of his NWO: "Peaceful settlements of disputes, solidarity against aggression, reduced and controlled arsenals, and just treatment of all peoples."

Now, peace, collective security, arms control, and justice are fine goals. But the list provocatively omits the values that have been traditionally invoked by the modern presidency to justify intervention abroad: self-determination (Wilson); freedom (FDR, Truman, and Kennedy); human rights (Carter); democracy and the democratic revolution (Reagan). Bush did invoke justice, but last and least. His principal passion is something quite different: "The quest for the new world order is, in part," he said at Maxwell, "a challenge to keep the dangers of disorder at bay." For Bush, the new world order is principally about order.

Order is indeed a high value. But maintaining order is a rather pinched vision of America's mission in the world. Under this NWO, the United States does the work of the Congress of Vienna. The international system becomes a club of existing nation-states, acting together if necessary, to maintain the status quo. Under this NWO, the United States expresses a preference for Yugoslavia over its republics; is most tepid in support of Baltic independence (to say nothing of that of Georgia, Armenia, or Moldavia); deals with Deng Xiaoping of Tiananmen Square in the name of stability; saves Saddam after the Gulf war rather than risk the dissolution of the Iraqi state.

This is a highly constrained vision of the world. Order is the watchword, stability the goal, sovereignty the most sacred principle. The president favors this conservative vision. But even he does not completely embrace it. Some of his actions suggest a far more expansive, morally self-confident, indeed, radical NWO II.

Three days after the Maxwell speech, the president, despite himself, gave a glimpse of this unarticulated NWO II. Having finally been persuaded that the Kurds needed saving, the president intervened, almost unilaterally, to save them. Together with the British and the French, he sent thousands of troops to occupy a faraway piece of sovereign territory.

The legal basis for what he did is, to be generous, thin. As *The New York Times* put it none too subtly: "Helicopter teams moved into Iraq against a backdrop of confusion over the diplomatic and legal foundations of the American plan." Not that we could not round up the usual international lawyers to mine Security Council resolutions for retrospective legal justification for our action. That, after all, is what international lawyers are for. But let us be honest. We acted unilaterally in Kurdistan because it was the right thing to do. A



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couple of allies did join us. But we did not occupy northern Kurdistan in the name of international legality. We did so in the name of right, self-evident right.

Hence the fundamental law of NWO II: when, as in Kurdistan, the existing international rules conflict with basic American values, to hell with the rules. And the corollary: the new world order should be an assertion of American interests and values in the world, if necessary asserted unilaterally. Where possible, we should act in concert with others. Where not, we should proceed regardless.

Of the two versions of the new world order, the president is clearly more comfortable with NWO I. But NWO I will not do. First, because it cannot command domestic support. The idea of being involved in the world in defense of a desiccated notion of international stability or a subtle maintenance of the balance of power is extremely uncongenial to Americans. Americans will venture abroad to do right things, but only to do right things. Otherwise they would rather stay home. In the Gulf, for example, the Kuwait policy commanded support when presented not as an issue of oil and jobs but as a war of liberation. In contrast, the postwar policy of allowing Saddam to stay in power as a way of maintaining a delicate balance of power in the region engendered dismay and disgust.

Second, NWO I is too weak an idea to deal with the crises of the post-cold war world. Specifically, it is not flexible and bold enough to confront the two looming revolutionary developments in the international system that will haunt it—and us—for the next decades.

First among these is a technological revolution: the advent of the age of weapons of mass destruction and the means to deliver them. According to the Pentagon, by the year 2000, now only nine years away, there will be two dozen developing nations with ballistic missiles, thirty with chemical weapons, ten with biological weapons, and almost as many with nuclear weapons. Iraq is the prototype of this kind of threat; tomorrow perhaps it will come from North Korea, Libya, Pakistan, Iran, South Africa.

It is banal to say that modern technology has shrunk the world. But the obvious corollary is rarely drawn: in a shrunken world the divide between regional superpowers and great powers is radically narrowed. Missiles shrink distance. Nuclear (or chemical or biological) devices multiply power. Both can be bought at market. Consequently, the geopolitical map is irrevocably altered. Fifty years ago, Germany had to be centrally located, highly industrial, and heavily populated to pose a threat to world security and to the other great powers. It was inconceivable that, say, a relatively small Middle Eastern state with an almost entirely imported industrial base could do anything more than disturb its neighbors. The central truth of the coming era is that this is no longer the case: relatively small, peripheral, and backward states will be able to emerge rapidly as threats not only to regional but to world security.

The second great challenge of the coming era is geopolitical: the breakup of the great multinational states (the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, perhaps India) and possible emergence among the rubble of raw, aggressive, perhaps virulent nationalism. The Sikhs and Kashmiris, the Croats and Georgians, the Russians too, enlist our sympathy today when they are down. When they are up, they and others now struggling to be free may act in ways that elicit horror.

These two challenges will have to be met by the new world order or the term has no meaning. There are no magic answers to how to deal with them. But any answers will likely involve breaking international rules and making new ones, a boldness that requires the radicalism of NWO II rather than the deep, almost paralytic conservatism of NWO I.

For example, in dealing with the threat of weapons of mass destruction it will become essential to confront and deter and, if necessary, disarm states that brandish and use these weapons. Doing so may violate current norms of international legality. It will certainly infringe on cherished ideas of sovereignty. Today, in the case of Iraq, we get international support for breaking these rules. (In fact, the "international community" sitting in the Security Council makes up the rules as it goes along.) Tomorrow we may not be so lucky. In which case, the United States will have to act alone, backed by as many of its allies as will join the endeavor. There may not be many.

As for the second threat, the rise of aggressive nationalisms, here too the United States will have to try to create new norms and rules. To satisfy small national groups seeking independence without totally fracturing the world, we will need to invent some concept of subsovereignty—a kind of autonomy that grants peoples an intermediate status between subservience and full statehood. Subsovereignty might offer some way out of the Soviet, Yugoslav, Indian, even the Palestinian conundrum. Our unplanned intervention in Kurdistan may actually show the way: a new world order that does not just enforce rules, but breaks old rules and makes new ones.

As in 1946-49, it is the United States that will create a new world order. The only question is, what kind? Bush seems to prefer the merely orderly order of NWO I. The coming crises, heralded by the minicrisis in Kurdistan, will require the boldness of NWO II, a more American order.

I say this with little enthusiasm. I find these challenges stirring but at the same time deeply dismaying. I would much have preferred that after the long twilight struggle America enjoy the respite from toil and danger to which it is richly entitled. Alas, there is no end to toil, and it is not just naive but dangerous to pretend otherwise. Even after the defeat of the Soviet threat, we face a highly dangerous new world from which there is no escape. Our best hope for safety in such times, as in difficult times past, is in American strength and will: the strength to recognize the unipolar world and the will to lead it. ●



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# BOOKS & TheArts

## *Stanley Kauffmann on Films*

### Intermittent Fever

Eugene O'Neill's *All God's Chillun Got Wings* (1924) was not the first American play about interracial love; the line goes back at least to Dion Boucicault's *The Octoroon* (1859). Since O'Neill, there have of course been more plays on the subject, and of course some films. It's hardly surprising that the theme recurs in a country whose racial problems began early and remain severe. When at last a black filmmaker turns to the subject—the first one to do so, as far as I know—his choice seems historically inevitable, right, promising. More: Spike Lee's talent is by now a kind of cultural fact. But his **Jungle Fever** (Universal) disappoints.

The central story concerns a black man and a white woman. A successful, married architect, played by Wesley Snipes, lives on Striver's Row in Harlem. A young Italian-American woman, Annabella Sciorra, who lives in the Bensonhurst district of Brooklyn, becomes his secretary. They work together late, into the night, and things happen—in the office, at first. Word of their affair reaches Snipes's wife and Sciorra's father. Tempests follow, evictions from their respective homes. The two lovers then try to live with each other; but their feelings falter and they soon separate, presumably to return in time to their previous lives.

This is the picture's prime letdown—not that the lovers part, but that the experience, for all the family storms it causes, seems adventitious, thematically thin. All we get from it is that she wanted the experience of loving a black man, and he, never before maritally unfaithful, couldn't resist a white woman. Here, after some centuries, a black artist—a black filmmaker—has a chance to explore this deep-running subject in our society, and he doesn't add any more to it than what anyone might have guessed, in fact not a great deal more than the arc of many extramarital affairs.

Worse, this love affair is used principally as an armature for other stories, some of which—as Lee treats them—are more interesting: Snipes's troubles with his crackhead older brother and with his parents; Sciorra's ructions with her father and brothers; her pursuit by a shy Bensonhurst swain, John Turturro, and his eventual shift of affection to a young black woman who comes into his candy store every morning for her newspaper. (She wants the *Times*. Throughout, *The New York Times* is used as a mark of black upward mobility.) These stories and others absorb us more than the central love affair.

Lee's screenplay has two other striking flaws. First, he doesn't deal comfortably with the middle-class elements. Henry Louis Gates Jr. says that in the late '60s and '70s "many blacks became defensive about a middle-class past or future.... To be black and middle class was to betray, somehow, one's black heritage." This may be the case, but it hardly licenses Lee to handle the details of the middle-class world so loosely. In Snipes's architectural firm, would the two (white) owner-partners argue loudly with him about business matters, in front of others, as they follow him down a corridor to his office? Would Snipes's wife, Lonette McKee, throw him out of the house the way she does? She is drawn as an ultra-chic woman, a buyer at Bloomingdale's, but she throws his clothes out their first-floor window and yells at him through that window like a fishwife, in front of the neighbors. Lee's own background is said to be middle class. But his writing seems more authentic when he goes further down the line.

Second, mechanical plotting. Snipes confides about his white lover to a black friend. Why? Sciorra confides about her black lover to white friends. Why? In both cases, only because the author needs to have the beans spilled. Snipes's preacher-father and his mother invite him and Sciorra to dinner, and the father then excoriates Sciorra viciously. If we can foresee that this will happen, why not Snipes? When his druggy brother steals their father's TV set, Snipes trails him to a crack den to get it back only to find that it has been sold for drugs, which any 10-year-old could have predicted. At the very end Snipes is accosted by a drug-crazed black hooker. In a spasm of compassion, he embraces her and lets out a cry of anguish. This is a glib, last-minute grab at profundity that doesn't grow out of what has happened before, as flashily clever as the hero's embrace of the starveling child at the end of the RSC production of *Nicholas Nickleby*. (Did Lee see that show?)

But turn from Writer Lee to Director Lee, and we're in different country. Yes, he uses an irrelevant iris-out, and he uses again the sterile device of having people ride (inexplicably) past a background

### FILMS WORTH SEEING

**An Angel at My Table.** *Jane Campion, a New Zealand filmmaker, dramatizes the autobiography of Janet Frame, a New Zealand writer. Fresh, vigorous, direct. (Reviewed 6/3/91)* **My Father's Glory** *and* **My Mother's Castle.** *More dramatized autobiography. Two companion features drawn from Marcel Pagnol's childhood and youth in Provence. Treated with golden glow by the director Yves Robert, and played by a cast clothed in child's-eye goodness. (7/15&22/91)* **Thelma and Louise.** *The screenwriter's hand almost visibly forces doom on the title characters, but there's point and wit in these adventures of two women in the Southwest. (7/1/91)* **Truth or Dare.** *Madonna in a clever documentary about herself that tells all you could possibly want to know—about her and our self-publicizing age. (6/10/91)* **—SK**



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when they are supposed to be walking. But by and large Lee directs forcefully, keenly, with the assurance of someone born to do this work. The scenes in Turturro's candy store, when Sciorra's brothers and friends tease him and fight with him, seem played to street-corner percussion. The scenes with the druggy brother, Samuel L. Jackson, are pungently sad. (While he begs for money from his family, he performs the dance steps he used to do as appeals to past family fun.)

And a new extraordinary quality appears in Lee's directing—gentleness. The Snipes-Sciorra affair, as it begins and grows, is given a tenderness hitherto unseen in Lee's work. (Except for the quite brief glimpse of Danny Aiello's feelings for Lee's sister in *Do the Right Thing.*) Lee's treatment of Turturro is tender, too, and gives Turturro himself a break in his long line of snivelling sociopaths. In fact, Turturro's response to his black woman customer, of which we see only the start, hints at a more rewarding relationship than the scanted Snipes-Sciorra fling.

Snipes's acting has been highly praised; to me, he is moderately competent. Sciorra has had some stage experience, but her acting seems bred of films, small gestures, inflections, hesitations, impulses—a subtle oscillograph of buried feelings. Jackson, as the desperate brother, gives the film's strongest performance. When he enters, he commands, with innate power and with character conviction. Lee himself, as Snipes's blabbermouth friend, gives more or less the performance he has given several times before in his films, but with less asked of him, so he's more acceptable.

Ossie Davis is saddled with the preacher-father role. He's an imposing actor, but the role is tedious and is further burdened with a long monologue about sexual tensions between blacks and whites in the South that he came from, material that wasn't entirely new when Lillian Smith used it in *Strange Fruit* (1944). We learn a great deal more about current attitudes toward sex, black-white and black-black, from a seemingly improvised scene between McKee and some of her black girlfriends—a scene that, by indirection, underscores how Lee has deprived the Snipes-Sciorra affair of insights.

A last note, about the music. Lee uses three Sinatra recordings, old favorites, that soar under quarrels in the candy store and elsewhere. A wryly effective way for Lee to further his fixation with Italian-black relations. And a sort of proof that he is still more at ease, more subtle, in his old, by-now familiar territories than in this new one of middle-class interracial love. As a director, he grows, he excites. As a screenwriter, he still has more ambition than grasp. ●

# *Robert Brustein on Theater*

## The Dreams of Ingmar Bergman

For Ingmar Bergman, making movies has often been a way of enacting dreams. Now in his 70s and retired from filmmaking, he is continuing to process these dreams on stage. The dream play, of course, is hardly a Bergman invention. It was originated by Strindberg, who, in turn, was influenced by Calderon (*Life Is a Dream*) and Shakespeare (*The Tempest*). As a film director Bergman has never concealed his indebtedness to his fellow Swede, whether in theme—his obsession with the sexual transactions between men and women—or in form—his attraction to magic, hypnotism, séances, ghosts, doppelgängers, hallucinations, and other manifestations of the spirit life. (Bergman's haunting masterpiece *Wild Strawberries* is virtually a compendium of Strindbergian images and effects.) It is fitting, therefore, that *Bergman on Stage*, a presentation of the Royal Dramatic Theatre of Sweden under this great artist's direction (performed at the Brooklyn Academy of Music's Majestic Theater), should begin with Strindberg's *Miss Julie*, followed by *A Long Day's Journey Into Night*, written by Strindberg's most passionate American disciple, Eugene O'Neill, and *A Doll's House*, written by his Scandinavian arch-rival, Henrik Ibsen (a production that opened too late for review).

**Miss Julie** is not normally thought of as a dream play. It was written during Strindberg's so-called "naturalistic" period, when he was under the influence of such hardheaded masculine mentors as Darwin, Zola, and Nietzsche. The playwright wrote a brash, confident preface to the work in which he congratulated himself for adhering to the most strenuous authenticity and objectivity. Despite his pose as a literary scientist, however, Strindberg was incapable of remaining detached from his material, especially since *Miss Julie*, like *The Father*, was inspired by his embattled relations with his first wife, Siri Von Essen. And the play, besides featuring such non-naturalistic elements as ballet, mime, and a musical interlude, includes the narration of two dreams in which Strindberg, anticipating Freud, locates the very life drives of his central characters.

The dreams concern rising and falling. Jean, a valet who aspires to the nobility, recurrently dreams about lying on the ground beneath a great tree, determined to pull himself up from the dirt to a golden nest above. Julie, an aristocrat who likes to mix with the servants, dreams about looking down from the height of a great pillar, drawn to the earth below, though fearful that the fall will mean her death. These dreams are insinuated into the dramatic design of the play, shaped by Strindberg like two intersecting lines. Jean reaches up and Julie falls down, both meeting on equal ground only at the moment of seduction, in the arms of the great equalizer, sex.

Strindberg's sympathies toward these rising and falling characters are divided rather than neutral. Like Tennessee Williams—whose *A Streetcar Named Desire* recapitulates *Miss Julie* in contemporary terms—he is attracted by the superior social graces of his heroine, and also by the brutal animal magnetism of his hero. Jean triumphs over Julie sexually, but she commits a noble sacrificial act of which he is incapable, by taking her own life at the end of the play. As she walks resolutely to her death, razor in hand, and Jean cowers abjectly near the Count's boots, the split loyalties of the author are clarified. She has remained an aristocrat and died, Jean has remained a servant and lived, while their dreams have been played out in a reality that suggests the great sexual and social conflicts of our time.

Bergman handles the production as if it were a morbid version of *Smiles of a Summer Night*, turning it into a showcase for splendid acting. Although he endows Jean's fiancée Kristin, the cook (usually played as a sweaty slattern picking her teeth), with a new dimension of dignity, he essentially and understandably concentrates on detailing the characters of Jean and Julie. Peter Stormare, who was Bergman's savage Hamlet, plays Jean like a fastidious arriviste whose affected French manners are tinged with a streak of sadism, while Lena Olin's Julie consolidates her standing as one of our most seductive actresses. Costumed in a flaming red dress, her face marked with the trace of a scar administered by her fiancé's riding whip (an interpolation suggested by one of Strindberg's early drafts), she is a volatile compound of conflicting moods, swinging between



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erotic captivation, dazed helplessness, and murderous rage. A brunette as Masha in the film *Enemies: A Love Story* (which could be another title for this play), she has auburn hair here, and a nervous charged energy that animates her every move. Critics have been suffering ventricular fibrillation over this hoarse-voiced actress, and I felt a few heart murmurs myself. She is the consummate Miss Julie of our time.

If Bergman's production is not the consummate *Miss Julie* of our time (that distinction still belongs to Alf Sjöberg's 1950 film), this may be the result of directorial modesty. In contrast with the radical liberties that he took with Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, he seems unusually deferential toward Strindberg, almost absent. Gunilla Palmstierna-Weiss's setting (she designed all the shows along with all the costumes) is a handsome, spanking clean Scandinavian kitchen, decorated with copper and brass utensils and a professional stove. And the Midsummer Eve lighting (uncredited), which changes from white to orange in the course of this bright Nordic night, exactly captures the sense of entrapment in a world where there are no dark corners in which to hide. But the only directorial interpolation (aside from Julie's scar) is a crudely executed drunken interlude, punctuated by belching and retching, that Bergman substituted for Strindberg's high-spirited festivities.

Bergman shows no such punctiliousness with O'Neill. His current (and abridged) version of **A Long Day's Journey into Night** is a very fresh look at a familiar masterpiece. In place of the realistic New London parlor, Palmstierna-Weiss provides a simple raked platform that looks as if it is floating, decorated with a few pieces of furniture: a card table and chairs, an armchair, two classic pillars that double as cabinets. Projections can be vaguely perceived on the black rear scrim: the exterior of the house, a window, a door, and (at the end of the play) a skeletonized tree. But this is a play in which the characters enact their roles in a void, permeated always with the presence of fog.

Bergman appears to have conceived this work as the dream of Edmund Tyrone, which is to say of the character's surrogate and creator, Eugene O'Neill himself. The lights go up on a tableau of the family—father, mother, and two sons—a group portrait of the love, the recrimination, and the guilt that characterize their relationship. At this moment time seems frozen, and the theme of the play, as later expressed by Mary, has already emerged: "The past is the present, isn't it? It's the future, too." The initial image also expresses the symbiotic nature of the family, which is like an organism with four branches—a twitch in one creates a spasm in another, and no action can be undertaken without myriad ramifications.

The journey of the play, undertaken with the aid of alcohol and drugs, is a voyage into the past. Evoking memory and desire, all four characters seek to find there the source of their pain. Bergman does not bother to change the lights to signify this excursion into the night. The entire action seems to be enshrouded in fog, suggesting that the whole play is a memory. When Edmund, in one of the four long confessions that make up the fourth act, tells his father how at sea he once merged with the infinite, he consults a diary as if reading notes for a projected play. At other times he hovers on the edge of the set, an eavesdropper on the scenes in which he doesn't participate. At such moments, O'Neill and his character are identical, and his whole dead family is being dreamed onto the stage.

Peter Stormare is the only Bergman actor who appears in more than one of the current presentations, but he is a vital demonstration of the virtues of repertory theater. In contrast with his stiff imperious valet in *Miss Julie*, Stormare's Edmund is bent into a question mark of pain, protecting his damaged chest during fits of racking coughs and chills. It is a remarkably emotional performance, at the same time irritable and grief-stricken, accusatory and forgiving, and like that of the other three actors, it is based on a foundation of love. Thommy Berggren as Jamie (here called "Jim") is his match in power and depth, delivering a scorching, self-hating performance that, if it does not erase memories of Jason Robards, uncovers new aspects of the role.

Jarl Kulle is splendid as James Tyrone, the potentially gifted actor who, after having been praised by Edmund Booth, wasted his talents in an endless tour of *The Count of Monte Cristo* for commercial gain. ("What the hell was it I wanted to buy?") Barrel-chested and beetle-browed, he presides over his family like a ship's master protecting the cargo from the crew—the bank account, the whiskey, and especially the electric lights, which are continually being extinguished for reasons of economy (the chandelier, however, a prop on which Olivier built the Gaspard-miser quality that dominated his interpretation, is kept offstage). My only quibble with Kulle's performance is that he speaks his Shakespeare like a hambone—O'Neill conceived Tyrone as a simple actor of peasant stock, "not a bit stuck-up or


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vain," a quality that Frederic March caught perfectly in his definitive performance of the role in its world premiere.

As for Bibi Andersson's Mary, it is a bit too careful and neat, in character and in appearance, to be entirely satisfying, but her pain-wracked performance nevertheless re-establishes the mother as the center of the play, a position that Florence Eldrige and Constance Cummings were forced to cede to stronger actors. Mary is isolated from her family in drugs and dreams, but she is the focus of all their anxieties, uniting father and sons in bonds of love and concern. Bergman's simple, unadorned floating platform keeps all four characters locked in each other's fate. It is an object on which dreams are made, and the subterranean energies coursing through the great works of poetic realism are manifested in powerful ways. ●

**What Chinese democrats mean by democracy.**

# *Tiananmen and the Cosmos*

**By Andrew J. Nathan**

From China a friend elliptically writes, so as to avoid alarming the postal censor, "I remember what you said in your letter of June 1989 about 'I still believe that in the long run. . . .' I think you were right because I myself still believe that in the long run. . . ." Scholars in China privately continue projects that were canceled after the crackdown, believing that their recommendations on political reform will be heeded later. Local Party officials around the country make fun of the latest campaign to emulate a revolutionary model hero. A university refuses to turn in students who participated in the democracy demonstrations.

The Chinese, in short, are outwaiting their rulers. In 1988 the controversial television series "River Elegy" likened Chinese civilization to the stagnant Yellow River that must find its way to the cosmopolitan blue sea. Today the Chinese Communist Party is no longer the river god that it once was, able to turn back the current. It issues directives on vigilance against foreign ideological subversion, but they are like paper boats that face upstream and float downstream. China is finally joining the world—economically, culturally, politically. It will, eventually, become a democracy. But of what sort? New documentation on the movement for democracy that stirred the world in 1989, in the volumes published by M. E. Sharpe, provides a clearer idea of what the movement stood for, of its limits, of its prospects. And the views of three of China's most influential pro-democracy intellectuals can now be read in English.

Fang Lizhi, a physicist and academic administrator, was expelled from the Chinese Communist Party in 1987 because his campus speeches in favor of academic freedom were deemed largely responsible for the student demonstrations of December 1986 and January 1987. Fang's continued criticisms of the regime helped create the atmosphere for the movement of spring 1989. Although he played no direct role in it, the government was poised to arrest him as a "backstage manipulator" when he took refuge in the American Embassy in Beijing. He was released about a year later, and is now a fellow at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton.

Yan Jiaqi, founder and former head of the official Institute of Political Science in Beijing, was a high-level political adviser to the reformist Party secretary Zhao Ziyang when the democracy movement broke out. He tried to encourage the government to accede to the demands of the students for dialogue. When this failed, he sided with the demonstrators and had to flee China after the crackdown. He now lives in Paris, where he is one of the leaders of a democratic organization in exile called the Federation for a Democratic China.

Wang Ruowang is a senior Shanghai writer. Although relatively little known in the West, he was important enough to share the distinction with Fang and the journalist Liu Binyan of being among the first victims of Deng Xiaoping's purges in January 1987. (Only one prominent intellectual, Ruan Ming, now at Princeton, had been expelled earlier under Deng for dissidence. Scores, of course, have been purged subsequently.) Wang had already been expelled once before, during the anti-rightist movement of 1957. In both cases, his crime was that he wrote honestly.

China is one of the great world civilizations whose integration with modern international culture has been most protracted and painful. It is engaging it slowly and on its own terms. It will eventually produce a version of that culture that is distinctively its own. What Chinese culture will look like is partly visible in Taiwan and Hong Kong, but the mainland is much vaster and internally more diverse. It is likely to Westernize less. The shape of Chinese democracy is not easy to detect from the universal-sounding slogans—science, democracy, human rights—that its advocates employ. The sameness of language, itself a phenomenon of the international culture, masks significant differences in assumptions and values.

Considering the national scope of the 1989 movement, we generalize about its meaning at risk. There were not scores of localities where demonstrations oc-

*Bringing Down the Great Wall: Writings on Science, Culture, and Democracy in China*
by Fang Lizhi
edited and translated by James Williams
(Knopf, 336 pp., $19.95)

*Cries for Democracy: Writings and Speeches from the 1989 Chinese Democracy Movement*
edited by Han Minzhu and Hua Sheng
(Princeton University Press, 401 pp., $45, $14.95 paper)

*Beijing Spring, 1989: Confrontation and Conflict, The Basic Documents*
edited by Michel Oksenberg and Marc Lambert
(M. E. Sharpe, 350 pp., $45, $15.95 paper)

*The Chinese People's Movement: Perspectives on Spring 1989*
edited by Tony Saich
(M. E. Sharpe, 220 pp., $32.50, $14.95 paper)

*The Pro-Democracy Protests in China: Reports from the Provinces*
edited by Jonathan Unger
(M. E. Sharpe, 252 pp., $35, $15.95 paper)

*Hunger Trilogy*
by Wang Ruowang
translated by Kyna Rubin with Ira Kasoff
(M. E. Sharpe, 136 pp., $19.95)

*Yan Jiaqi and China's Struggle for Democracy*
translated and edited by David Bachman and Dali L. Yang
(M. E. Sharpe, 240 pp., $45, $16.95 paper)

Andrew J. Nathan is professor of political science at Columbia University and the author most recently of *China's Crisis* (Columbia University Press).



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curred, there were hundreds. Except for the Sichuan city of Chengdu, about which both *The New York Times* and Amnesty International have reported, almost nothing is known about any location beyond the ten places described in *The Pro-Democracy Protests in China.* All of these are big cities, except for one small town in Hunan province whose story Anita Chan uncovered through interviews in Hong Kong. The reports give some sense of variation. In Chan's small town, a local schoolteacher advocated direct elections of central government leaders, a proposal not heard in Beijing so far as I know. In Xi'an, as reported by Joseph Esherick, a mixed crowd of demonstrators became unruly in a way that did not happen in Beijing, where the students by and large kept the movement under tight control. In tropical Fujian, obsessed with business across the Taiwan Strait, as Mary S. Erbaugh and Richard Kraus report, the demonstrations were low-keyed, and the demands were vaguer than in Beijing.

In Beijing itself, as the Australian scholar Geremie Barmé observes about the Beijing scene of May and June 1989, there was predominantly a movement of intellectuals (a term that in China includes college students). Barmé saw a cohort of writers who "had draped ribbons across their chests like contestants in a beauty pageant and had written on them their names and most famous works." Demonstrators in Tiananmen Square collected autographs from the most famous student leaders and from any foreigner whatsoever, including Harrison Salisbury (who, Barmé devastatingly notes, was under the illusion that they wanted his signature because they admired his book on the Long March). As the hunger strike dragged on, and martial law signaled the hardening of the official position, students dreamed of dying in the poses of the revolutionary heroes immortalized on the Monument to Revolutionary Martyrs where they were gathered. Floral offerings were placed on a makeshift altar before an immobilized bus that sheltered the students who refused food and water. The hours that they had fasted were posted on the side of the bus.

Other social groups were more or less rigorously excluded by the student leaders. Esherick tells of young men from the countryside who joined the crowds in Xi'an, and the same thing must have happened elsewhere, since the cities of Deng's China are full of young men from the villages looking for work. Still, we have little sense of how deeply into the countryside the movement penetrated, or what the peasants thought. No peasant organizations are known to have been formed. To differing degrees in different places, the demonstrations were joined by workers and *getihu*—the new class of small-scale individual entrepreneurs spawned by the reforms. Lawrence Sullivan, in Tony Saich's collection, refers to these forces as an emergent civil society; but they do not yet have the level of coherence and social autonomy that the term implies.

The intellectuals tried to limit the agenda to their own issues of freedom of speech and dialogue with the government. The anthropologist Frank Niming explains the exclusion of other groups as one of several expedients that the demonstrators adopted to avoid provoking the government. They kept the focus initially on mourning for Hu Yaobang, a leader who symbolized not the opposition to communism but the good side of communism, and later they shifted to the equally mom-and-apple-pie question of the health of young, hunger-striking students. They preferred non-students to play the role of supportive bystanders rather than the more confrontational role of demonstrators. When non-students did demonstrate, moreover, they marched mostly in formation with their work units rather than as a mass of individuals, again signaling the lack of challenge to the social order. As one wall poster said, the party is like a donkey, which should be prodded to move forward but not poked so hard that it kicks.

Barmé notes that although some of the lower-class demonstrators referred to themselves as *shimin*, as urbanites or "civilians," a term that is still fairly new in China, the intellectuals continued to call them by the old Communist terms "masses" and "common people." In view of all this, Erbaugh and Kraus charge that the democracy movement was "an elitist movement." In Fujian, they say, many of the activists seemed to equate democracy with little more than the recruitment of educated people into government on the basis of merit rather than political connections. As Yan Jiaqi's editors David Bachman and Dali Yang put it, the intellectuals have accepted the "self-defined mission of saving China," intending not to distribute power but to exercise it. The intellectuals, in sum, want democracy without the demos.

This charge draws support from the fact that the theory of "new authoritarianism" continues to be actively promoted by some among the democrats now in exile. One section of Michel Oksenberg and Marc Lambert's collection is devoted to documents that illustrate this theory, which was originally associated with thinkers around Zhao Ziyang and endorsed by Deng. Its proponents argue that China can move toward democracy only by passing through a phase of authoritarianism, during which painful economic and political reforms will be accomplished by strong-arm methods. Such authoritarianism would be "new" because its goal would be democracy. Many analysts have concluded that the theory was a tool in Zhao's bid for greater power in the Deng regime, but its persistence in China and among the exiles suggests that it draws on a deeper ambivalence among the intellectuals about democracy.

When the transition to democracy in China starts, the other social classes will face a long struggle to establish their place in it. And they will be further impeded by the fact that China's democrats have devoted little effort to designing the institutions of a democratic China. Among the numerous wall posters, speeches, and poems in *Cries for Democracy*, one finds almost no discussion of electoral systems, of the division of powers, of the role of parties, of the judiciary. During his service as a political adviser, Yan Jiaqi limited himself to a handful of modest proposals, especially fixing terms of office for government officials, involving technical experts in decision-making, strengthening the people's congress system and proceduralism in policy-making, no matter what the procedures might be. He devoted more attention to arguing what democracy could do for China than to discussing what it would be or how to introduce it.

Keeping the institutional vision of democracy vague was, again, partly a tactic. It did help to disarm the regime for a while. *Beijing Spring, 1989* provides the full texts of the "dialogues" granted to the students by State Council spokesman Yuan Mu and by a group of officials headed by Premier Li Peng. The government men all insisted that the regime shared the students' concerns, that a free press and channels for dialogue already existed, and that any crackdown that might be necessary to preserve social order would affect only a handful of bad elements who had wormed their way among the patriotic students. But as Melanie Manion points out in her introduction to the book, overlapping terms and symbols disguised divergent stances. The Party could accept the students' slogans, but it could not compromise on power.

There was a noteworthy exception to the dearth of practical proposals. This



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was the last minute call by followers of Zhao Ziyang, who lost power with the declaration of martial law, to summon an emergency meeting of the National People's Congress or its standing committee to rescind martial law and to dismiss Li. Yet the ineffectiveness of this effort shows well enough why such steps were not tried earlier or more often. The main organizer of the attempt, Cao Siyuan, was jailed without charges for a year, and he is now prevented from traveling outside of China.

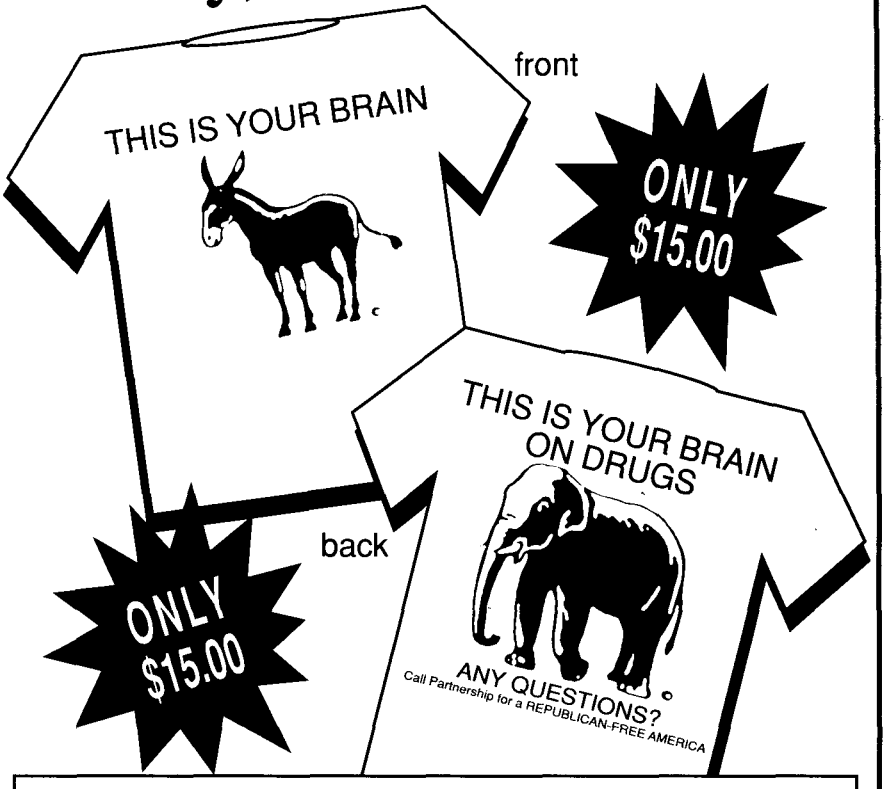
But the avoidance of institutional proposals was, unfortunately, more than a tactic. It was also a consequence of deeper habits of thought, particularly of the idea that democracy is something much more and much greater than an improvised and unstable and flawed compromise among competing forces that can never be satisfied. Chinese democrats dream of something better than what Winston Churchill called "the worst political system except for all the others." Three times in his collection of essays and speeches, Fang recalls an incident that occurred while he was a visiting scholar at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, a year before he was expelled from the Chinese Communist Party. "I was obviously neither an immigrant nor a citizen," Fang remembers, "but nonetheless I received a report from my congressman giving an account to the citizens of just what he'd been up to." This showed that "in democratic countries, *I* am the master and the government is responsible to *me*." It may be hard for Americans to suppress a smile at Fang's response to a newsletter. But we should remember that while members of China's National People's Congress sometimes make "inspection tours," they never even pretend to account to their constituents.

Nowhere are the hopes placed on democracy higher than in the largest country that doesn't have it. According to Fang, if democracy were implemented in China, policy would reflect public wishes, decisions would be implemented smoothly, corrupt leaders would be removed from office, government would serve the interests of all classes and nationalities. Yan Jiaqi believes that democracy would unleash creativity and initiative, allow for social trust and cooperation, create "love for the collective," and promote modernization. The "New May Fourth Manifesto" issued by the Beijing Students' Federation in 1989 declares that democracy would bring to bear the collective wisdom of the people for modernization while allowing the full development of each individual's abilities and the protection of each individual's interests.

This view of the potential of politics has roots in early Chinese thought, in which the human world was seen as an integral part of a cosmos ordered by moral rather than physical consistency. Cosmic harmony was thought to descend from the heavens to the natural world to human society and finally to the mind of the individual—and then to extend back, for the Chinese saw the entire cosmos as responding to the moral or immoral behavior of human beings, especially the ruler. So strong was this belief in the cosmic unity of the human and natural worlds that Fang uses it to explain why the Chinese failed to develop science. He points out that they did not expect nature to exhibit physical regularity. Since they could explain such anomalies as floods, earthquakes, epidemics, eclipses, and shooting stars as responses to moral irregularities at court, there was no need to chase down the complicated physical explanations that produced the scientific breakthroughs of Galileo, Newton, and Einstein.

In the same way, when Chinese in the late nineteenth century began to ponder the international strength of democratic countries, they explained it by saying that democracy was a political system in tune with the order of the uni-


"Okay, one more time..."

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verse. As Hao Chang of Ohio State University has shown in *Chinese Intellectuals in Crisis*, the seminal thinker Kang Youwei (1858-1927) declared that the ideal society, which he called the Great Unity, would be a democratic, federal welfare state of material abundance and technological advancement, devoid of private property, free of inequalities based on class, gender, and race, and unified by the innate moral consciousness shared by all its members.

Kang's influence on Mao Zedong is obvious. Through Mao, if not directly, Kang and his generation have also influenced the current generation of thinkers. Given the continuing link between the cosmos and the polity in Chinese thought, it is no coincidence that one of China's leading democratic thinkers is a professional cosmologist, and that James Williams, a graduate student at Berkeley specializing in the history of science, begins his collection of Fang's essays with selections from his cosmological writings.

Fang was trained as a physicist, but he turned to cosmology during the Cultural Revolution when he was deprived of laboratory facilities. In the early 1970s he was criticized for advocating the Big Bang theory of the origins of the universe, which was labeled "bourgeois idealism" by Chinese ideologues. The experience of battling interference in his scientific work confirmed Fang's commitment to academic freedom, but the impact of this episode went deeper. Fang was both a Communist and a cosmologist, and he believed in both bodies of theory.

Chinese Marxism has never admitted to being what the West calls an ideology. As a field of study, it was referred to as "philosophy" in the schools. This term was not meant to convey the Western sense of speculativeness, or a divorce from reality. It denoted a master science—"dialectical materialism"—which could guide the development and integrate the findings of all other sciences. Fang's conflict with the ideologues led him to conclude that "philosophy is constantly withdrawing from areas that were once within its domain, while natural science moves into them one by one."

I do not think that this was just a politically cautious way of saying in 1982, while he was still a Party member, that philosophy is bunk. It reflected a particular conception of science as being able to provide certain knowledge about an ever expanding circle of issues. So far as one can tell from the non-technical excerpts provided here, Fang's view of science is not at all Popper's or Kuhn's; he does not construe science as an approximation, as provisional knowledge that is true only to the extent that it has not yet been falsified, as a constructed paradigm that will hold sway for a limited historical period. For Fang, science is able to make the same kinds of all-embracing claims to certainty as the dialectical materialism that it displaces. Even the old idea of cosmic harmony reappears when Fang argues that the beauty of a certain mathematical concept is evidence for the inevitability of democracy, on the grounds that both the formula and democracy demonstrate the principle of harmony that is the essential nature of the universe.

In the 1980s, under Deng, "philosophy" retreated not only from the realm of natural sciences, but also from the fields of economic and social policy, from foreign policy, to some extent from literature, and, cautiously, from discussions of how to reform China's political institutions. Many Chinese believed, like Fang, in the ability of science to move in where philosophy moved out, not only in dealing with questions of the natural world but in solving those of the human world as well. Fang writes that "the basic principles and standards of modernization and democratization are like those of science—universally applicable. In this regard there's no Eastern or Western standard, only the difference between 'backward' and 'advanced,' between 'correct' and 'mistaken.' "

A similar faith is expressed by Yan Jiaqi. Yan studied physics in college, then transferred into the field of dialectical materialism. It was not until the reform period that he was assigned to establish the new field for China of political science, a term intended even more literally there than here. Like Fang, Yan considers that political problems are subject to scientific solutions. In the 1978 essay that first made him widely known, Yan uses the device of fictional time travel to contrast the "court of religion" in seventeenth-century Rome, the "court of reason" in Enlightenment France, and the "court of practice" in a futuristic China. Galileo, Voltaire, and Deng were his heroes, because each defended the sovereignty of science against dogmatism. When Yan says that "for science, all that is not understood can be understood," he does not refer only to the physical world. He means that democracy springs as much from objective truth as does $e = mc^2$.

And many of China's other proponents of democracy have also come from scientific backgrounds. Lu Xun, the famous left-wing writer of the 1930s, was trained as a physician. Wang Juntao, now serving a thirteen-year sentence as the alleged backstage eminence of the Tiananmen incident, graduated in physics from Beijing University. Chen Yizi, former head of a major reform think tank, studied physics before he was sent down to the countryside during the Cultural Revolution. (He now heads the Center for Contemporary China in New York, which produces policy papers for post-Deng China.)

Nor is the scientism of the democrats a recent phenomenon. The May Fourth Movement of 1919, conventionally viewed as the beginning of China's democratic revolution, was based on the slogan of "science and democracy." In *Cries for Democracy*, the "new May Fourth manifesto" alludes to democracy as "the spirit of science." A poster at Beijing University called for a government with science as its "sole guiding ideology." When Chinese democrats speak of democracy as scientific, or defend it as mandated by "natural law," they mean that democracy is the only ontologically correct political system, the only kind of system that is compatible with the nature of the universe. Institutional questions are secondary, because democracy carries the inevitability and the perfection of science. In retrospect, one can see that Mao's anti-intellectual policies grew out of a well-founded fear of science as the only ideology prestigious and ambitious enough to challenge Marxism for hegemony.

In contrast to the Soviet Union, the idea of human rights has so far been less corrosive in China. As a scientist who traveled from an establishment position to dissidence, Fang has often been called China's Sakharov. But the Fang we meet in this book is more like Dorothy addressing the Wizard of Oz. While Sakharov tangled with the Soviet leadership over nuclear weapons, the invasion of Czechoslovakia, political trials, religious repression, the falsification of history, and other issues, Fang got into trouble just by saying that "Marxism is no longer of much use," or that people suspected the Chinese leaders of putting money into Swiss bank accounts, or that a Beijing deputy mayor who accompanied a scientific delegation overseas was unqualified. In December 1988 he wrote a short letter to Deng suggesting the release of political prisoners.

Fang has bravely demonstrated the solvent effect of plainspeak on dictatorship, but neither he nor other leading democrats confronted the regime with a firm idea of human rights as something inherent and inalienable. Yan, in office at the



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time and perhaps constrained in his speech, states that the content of human rights "varies according to country and time." Fang defends rights as universal and grounded in scientific truth, but then he falls right into the Marxist trap of saying that rights are granted in exchange for a citizen's exercise of his or her duties.

Chinese thought has always proceeded from the premise that society rather than the individual is primary. The few Chinese who have looked carefully into Western thought see mostly nonsense in the Hobbesian or Lockean notion that man is, in some original way, an isolated individual. Any Chinese can see that this is not true, that people are born into society, that from the beginning they have social values and goals. It remains a real question for Chinese, perhaps especially for those committed to democracy, how it is that human rights can become so important that, in Ronald Dworkin's term, they "trump" other social values.

Regardless of the lack of a rights-oriented tradition, of course, Chinese are as strongly motivated by the desire for personal liberty as people anywhere. And nowhere has this impulse been more eloquently expressed than in the life and the writings of Wang Ruowang. Although abstractions like science, democracy, and human rights may have different meanings in China than in the West, a stubborn 73-year-old who wants to say what he thinks is the same everywhere. Wang was expelled from the Party, first in the 1950s, for describing the "conceit and arrogance" of Party members toward non-Party intellectuals, and then again in 1987, for calling for liberty when the Party was criticizing "bourgeois liberalization."

Wang treats eloquently the meaning of freedom in *Hunger Trilogy*, his memoir of three encounters with extreme hunger. His translator, Kyna Rubin, shows how Wang uses the battle with hunger as a symbol for the process of discovering truth, and food as a symbol for the freedom to express it. In his first chapter, Wang and his cellmates conduct a winning hunger strike against their Kuomintang jailers in the 1930s; in his second chapter, still animated by patriotism and Communist ideals, they keep up one another's spirits as they face starvation in the wilderness while fleeing from Japanese invaders in the 1940s; in his final chapter, Wang returns to the same Shanghai jail, where he is imprisoned as a counterrevolutionary during the Cultural Revolution. He discovers that conditions are worse than they were under the Nationalists, that a hunger strike cannot succeed against a regime that no longer cares whether prisoners live or die.

In the course of his meditations on food, Wang uncovers two senses in which food is like freedom. It is a source of satiety and satisfaction, and it is a focus of self-control and moral identity. He comes out of his last experience of hunger with no more compelling goal than to tell what he has seen. In Wang's case, as in Fang's, truth-telling proved mortally threatening to the regime, which detained him without charges for a year after the demonstrations in 1989, and today keeps him under a version of house arrest in Shanghai, unable to accept invitations to leave the country.

The democracy movement's abstention from institutional proposals was matched by the paucity of its criticism of existing institutions. Instead the movement chose to focus its attack on Chinese culture. Fang blamed China's "feudal culture" for the country's absolutism, narrow-mindedness, and love of orthodoxy. Yan blamed what he called China's "dragon culture" for the persistence of autocracy and personalized authority. A poster-writer in *Cries for Democracy* stated that "the character of the Chinese consists of two outstanding traits: slavishness and sectarianism." And the democrats in exile for the past two years have been conducting an inquest on "Communist culture" and "Communist discourse."

To some extent the attack on culture, like the avoidance of a multiclass alliance, was a tactic to discourage government repression: culture was a euphemism for political institutions that were too dangerous to attack openly. Still, euphemisms sometimes become habits of thought. The obsession with culture has been characteristic not only of the Deng era, but of democratic discourse in China throughout the century. The early twentieth-century democrat Liang Qichao, for example, argued that the trouble with the Chinese was that they were slavish, ignorant, selfish, dishonest, cowardly, and passive. Lu Xun personified his countrymen by the self-deceiving braggart and weakling Ah Q. The May Fourth democrats called for a "new culture."

The criticism of Chinese culture usually starts as an attack by cosmopolitan Chinese on parochial Chinese, develops into a savaging of the intellectual class by its own members, and spirals back into merciless individual introspection. All three stages were encapsulated in a remarkable essay by the young literary critic Liu Xiaobo, written just before he returned to China from New York in May 1989 to join the demonstrations (and translated by Barmé in a recent issue of *Problems of Communism*). Liu writes:

> I face an agonizing dilemma. I now know that in using Western values to criticize Chinese culture I have been attacking an ossified culture with only slightly less ossified weapons. I am like someone who, though partially paralyzed himself, mocks a paraplegic. Having transplanted myself into a completely open world, I am suddenly forced to acknowledge that not only am I no theoretician, but I'm not a famous person anymore. All I am is a normal person who has to start all over again from the beginning. In China, the backdrop of ignorance highlighted my wisdom. My courage was thrown into relief by the cowardice of others. I appeared healthy in comparison with the congenital idiocy of my surroundings. Yet, in the United States, now that this backdrop of ignorance and failing has disappeared, so has my wisdom, courage, and vigor. I have become a weakling unable to face myself.

The final hunger strike declaration issued by Liu and three colleagues on June 2 is reprinted in *Cries for Democracy*. (After June 4, Liu spent about a year in jail; he is now unemployed in Beijing.) Issued when the original hunger strike was petering out, it has been interpreted as an attempt to breathe new life into the confrontation with the regime. On rereading, however, it is a document of Calvinist severity. It begins: "We protest! We appeal! We repent!" It criticizes the intellectuals for spinelessness, the students for disorganization, emotionalism, and elitism, the government for autocracy and inflexibility, and all Chinese for a mentality of mutual hatred and violence. Calling for "the birth of a new political culture," the document ends by saying that "We all must carry out a self-examination!"

The intellectuals' criticism of national character sometimes becomes so intense that it ironically aligns them with the official view that the people are too backward to deserve the democracy that the intellectuals are demanding. After all, democracy would entail the exercise of power by peasants and workers who might turn out to be anti-Western, anti-scientific, anti-intellectual. This is another reason why discussion of specific political institutions is deemed premature.

As capitalism and democracy sweep the world, there are only two governments crowing that their policies have been right all along: the Americans, for promoting democracy, and the Chinese, for staving it off. In the eyes of the Chinese leaders, everything that has happened since Tiananmen confirms the wisdom of their authoritarian ideology.



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The free fall of the Soviet economy, the agonies of transition in Poland and East Germany, the political disorder in Albania and Yugoslavia, the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, the collapse of the Marxist regime in Ethiopia—almost anything that occurs in a world of rapid change shows to their satisfaction the overweaning importance of order. And attacks on China's human rights record in Congress and in the media, and even President Bush's commencement address at Yale in which he defended the extension of most-favored-nation treatment as the best way to promote Chinese human rights, demonstrate to the Chinese leadership that the West still seeks to subvert their society.

Shortly after his flight from China, Yan predicted that the regime of Li and Deng would fall within two years. His optimism was widely shared among his colleagues. But today the exile movement is at a low point. Membership has eroded, funding is hard to find, the movement is fragmented into scores of organizations. The younger leaders are learning English and entering graduate school, while many of the older ones are living from year to year on fellowships. Many in the overseas community criticize the movement as divided, demoralized, rudderless, even corrupt. But this harshness is misplaced. The democracy movement abroad needs to be evaluated for what it really is: not a political party with a program to hasten the fall of the Deng regime, but a community of intellectuals who are suffering the personal frustrations of exile yet also taking advantage of the opportunity to rethink. They are not the ones who will overthrow the regime, but they will be prepared with new ideas when it finally falls.

Yan Jiaqi, Fang Lizhi, Wang Ruowang, and many other democrats are more or less heavily marked by the ideas of the CCP out of which they came. The movement includes some more radical thinkers (the best example is Wei Jingsheng, still in jail serving a fifteen-year sentence for calling Deng a dictator), but with the breakdown of the old order, ex-Communists have become the main force. Their most subversive ideas—the hegemony of science, the yearning for liberty, the faith in the ability of democracy to create a vital collective, the claim of a special mission for the intellectuals—are only loosely Western as they interpret them. And *that* is what accounts for their appeal in China. In this sense, the regime's accusation that these dissidents are "total Westernizers" is unfair. Nobody need fear, or should hope, that China will become less Chinese for becoming more democratic. ●

# *Life Is Elsewhere*

**BY STANISLAW BARANCZAK**

## Immortality
## by Milan Kundera
## translated by Peter Kussi

**(Grove Weidenfeld, 345 pp., $21.95)**

## Love and Garbage
## by Ivan Klima
## translated by Ewald Osers

**(Knopf, 224 pp., $20)**

There must be something wrong with me or with the fiction of Central Europe, if these two very different books by two very different authors, each one of them hailed as the crowning achievement of a leading representative of the cutting-edge section of that cutting-edge area of contemporary literature that Central European fiction supposedly is, leave me each with the feeling that there is no edge to do any cutting.

*Love and Garbage* and *Immortality* landed at the same time on my lap by a coincidence of American publishing. The only two things that these novels seem to have in common is that they were both originally written in Czech, and that both represent the latest stages in two important writers' careers. Self-correction: there is a third analogy. Both books aspire to tackle problems as ungraspably immense as the abstract notions used in their titles (in *Love and Garbage*, I have in mind, of course, Love, although the author never lets us forget that Garbage has a universal, global, timeless, profound, and all-encompassing meaning, too).

Each does it, however, in an almost programmatically different way. I suspect that Klima, a resident of Prague for the last two decades, writes very much against Kundera, the émigré who for all these years has had Paris for his observation point. Symbolically enough, the plot of *Love and Garbage* starts on the level of a refuse-strewn Czech street, while *Immortality*'s first scene takes place in a sterile health club located on the top of a Paris high rise. Klima does his thing with utmost seriousness, with heavy-handed directness; even his symbols seem to have a sign that reads ATTENTION: SYMBOL attached to them, lest we overlook their exfoliating, larger-than-life implications. Kundera, by contrast, charms us with his usual witty, willful, and wily self. The lightness—the paraphrase is, I fear, unavoidable—the lightness of his writing would be unbearable, if not for the fact that underneath this glitzy surface there await us, as usual, profound observations and reflections; but these are, as usual, *really* unbearable.

At first glance, then, the difference between these two novels seems to come down to matters of tone and touch, as deadened, flat, and solemn in one case as they are debonair, flippant, and sleightish-of-hand in the other. But at second and third glances, the difference still does not seem to amount to anything else, and stays where we have first located it: in the realm of style. For all their contrasts in this regard, and notwithstanding the obvious fact that Kundera's novel offers, in the technical sense, much more literary finesse than Klima's, these books have a similar effect: they fill even the reader well-disposed to Central European fiction with a sense of surfeit and a sense of deficiency. They are both too much and too little.

The excess has to do with the overbearing role that the first-person narrator plays in both novels. His physical presence may seem different in them: in Klima, the narrator sits squarely in the center of events, combining the duties of the participant and the commentator, a character among the cast of other characters as well as an outside oracle; in Kundera, as in all his novels written in exile, the narrator is more of an outer demiurge who sets the represented world in motion, who creates it *ex nihilo*—and then mostly presides over its course while maintaining a considerable distance. (To be sure, he also inserts



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himself, the writer Milan Kundera, as a character into the plot that the writer Milan Kundera invented, but he does so in the demonstratively playful manner of a cameo shot, almost like Alfred Hitchcock boarding the train with a double-bass.)

The issue of the narrator's physical presence in the plot, though, does not have any bearing on the fact that both narrators are similarly omniscient and omnipotent. The narrator in *Love and Garbage* is a dissident writer in pre-1989 Prague, barred from publishing and forced to make his living by joining an orange-clad team of street sweepers and trash pickers, and so he seems to be a passive victim of circumstances beyond his control, an object of manipulation behind his back by anonymous and arbitrary forces of history, the political system, society, and so on. Or so he seems at the novel's very outset. A few pages later he emerges as something of a manipulator himself. He manipulates specific characters among the supporting cast (such as his fellow sanitary workers, whose confessions, reminiscences, and tall tales he provokes; and even more his wife and his lover, whose mutually conflicting demands he satisfies with an almost superhuman sexual prowess and a knack for balancing busy schedules), and he manipulates the reader. Manhandles the reader, in fact: for the reader of Klima's novel is pushed around with lots of heavy-handed gusto. Almost as if he were a trash picker himself, Klima's reader is forced time and again, page after page, to stoop and to pick up the hefty pieces of gratuitous comment, explanation, instruction, or generalized reflection that the novel's narrator never fails to leave in his trail.

The thing that makes this labor an experience one would rather forget is not the lack of proportion between the narrator's extensive outside comments on the one hand and the wilted and sketchy plot on the other. It is, rather, the arbitrariness, the sententiousness, and the priggishness of Klima's observations, which leave no room for the reader's own interpretation of the matter under discussion. The hallmark of Central European fiction over the past three decades or so has always been its steering toward the essay, the memoir, the writer's diary, the feuilleton, and other forms of nonfictional discourse. This generic oddity does not raise anybody's eyebrows anymore: every reader of Milan Kundera, Ludvik Vaculik, Josef Skvorecky, Tadeusz Konwicki, or Kazimierz Brandys is pretty well acquainted with their poetics. Still, we have the right to expect that the writer will make up for the intrusion of nonfictional assertiveness into his prose by trying to avoid random judgments, obnoxiously sweeping generalizations, or self-aggrandizing airs of authority, and leaving at least some of the interpretation of his narrative to the reader instead.

In Klima's novel, the reader expecting such subtle and patient and respectful treatment will be sorely disappointed. At the very beginning, on page eight exactly, there is a foretaste of Klima's method. An episode recalled and described (in this instance, the reminiscence of a freak accident, in which some hospital refuse about to be burned in a furnace exploded through the chimney-stack) is immediately generalized and supplied with a condign conclusion:

> It occurred to me that what had just happened was no more than an instructive demonstration of an everyday occurrence. No matter ever vanishes. It can, at most, change its form. Rubbish is immortal, it pervades the air, swells up in water, dissolves, rots, disintegrates, changes into gas, into smoke, into soot, it travels across the world and gradually engulfs it.

The haste with which the narrator comes up here with an explanation of what exactly he had in mind a paragraph before is telling: it looks as if he had serious doubts even as to the reader's attention span, not to mention his intellectual abilities. Here, as everywhere in *Love and Garbage*, we find ourselves carefully safeguarded against any silly speculation of our own. Like an overprotective husband who buys for his wife all her dresses, her shoes, and her underwear so that she wouldn't have to trouble her pretty little head, Klima bustles about to make life easier for us, his pretty-little-headed readers. To dispel any lingering uncertainty as to what the symbol of garbage might "stand for," he reiterates his explanation a couple of times more at other occasions. And the other notion of his title, I mean Love, being obviously more complex than Garbage, receives even more intense treatment of the same sort. Even though the description of the narrator's marital and extramarital feats is, as a rule, dispatched by means of brief we-made-love-like-people-possessed-type descriptions, Klima spares no pains in telling us, directly or through the extended exchanges between him and either of the two women he is involved with (both, by the way, are madly in love with him and supernaturally forgiving of his faithlessness), what love actually is.

But that's not all. There are so many other things about which we might, knock on wood, form an opinion or two on our own while reading *Love and Garbage*. To fend off this danger, Klima's narrator never misses a chance to provide us with an appropriate maxim, definition, or general truth. Are you uncertain as to what to think of lying, an important moral problem after all? Well, "There is nothing by which a person can justify a lie. It corrodes the soul just as much as indifference or hate."

Perhaps you are in need of something more specific about what actually Kafka's problem was, Kafka having been, after all, "certainly one of the most remarkable writers who ever lived and worked in Bohemia," as the novel helpfully informs us? No sweat:

> What Kafka was longing for most in his life was probably a human encounter. At the same time it represented for him a mysterious abyss whose bottom seemed to him unfathomable. . . . He was unable to sever himself from his father, nor did he bring himself to complete adult love—that was his abyss.

Oh, and aren't we under the wrong impression that hatred, violence, and self-interest may sometimes be good things? Here's the correct opinion:

> . . . I am more and more convinced that an action can be free only if it is inspired by humanity, only if it is aware of a higher judge. It cannot be linked to acts of arbitrariness, hatred, or violence, nor indeed to personal selfish interest.

It cannot indeed. There is no denying that Klima's narrator is a thoroughly decent individual. The trouble is, he is a terrible bore. As is usually the case with overprotective husbands, he makes life much easier for us, but life made easy brings ennui and emptiness. Not to mention the fact that our pretty little heads, relieved of intellectual responsibilities, may start getting ideas.

One such idea that this critic's head has got as a result of reading *Love and Garbage* may shock both writers as well as surprise anybody familiar with present-day Czech literature—I mean my notion that that these two novels, Klima's and Kundera's, despite their huge differ-


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ences in style and literary quality, share a kind of narrative approach and are, in the final analysis, much closer to one another than a superficial reading would suggest. The feature that the two narrators share is, first and foremost, their manipulative omnipotence. Klima's narrator makes use of this quality in a fairly simplistic fashion: he maneuvers his characters, his plot, and his ruminations in such a way that they are ultimately reduced to a child's set of building blocks—easy to pile atop one another, easy to demolish, and easy to sweep aside whenever the narrator needs more room to embark on another longer reminiscence or philosophical meditation. The narrator's self-declared authority manifests itself in this book not really in the degree of efficiency with which he controls his novelistic material; toddlers are free to put their building blocks on one another in whatever manner they wish, but their clumsiness hardly deserves to be called efficient. No, his authority manifests itself rather in the degree of nonchalance with which he elbows his material aside to make room for himself and his pompous enunciations.

But can we seriously impute authority to someone who is doing nothing except pushing and shoving others? In this respect, literature is not unlike basketball: the use of your elbows only covers up your sense of helplessness before a quicker opponent—in literature's case, before the reality that evades definition. (Characteristically, the only thing that *Love and Garbage* manages to say about pre-1989 Czechoslovakia is that everything in it is "jerkish," and this not-too-subtle epithet is used throughout the book as an all-purpose offensive weapon, very much like the elbows of Bill Laimbeer of the Detroit Pistons.) It is not very surprising that Klima's ostensibly omniscient narrator does not, in fact, know very much, and that he has not very much to tell us. Despite all his diverse experiences and his fine vantage point (it's not hard to imagine a good novel written from the perspective of a garbage collector), he is able only to turn out a few cries of indignation mixed with a few noble-sounding commonplaces.

Kundera's novel is incomparably more sophisticated and more pleasing. The strategy of its narrator is also incomparably more complex, just as the narrator himself is a much more engaging and entertaining individual. And yet this reader's frustration with *Immortality*, the combined sense of being overstuffed with words and undernourished with food for thought, was even greater than with *Love and Garbage*, perhaps because from Kundera one expects much more. I guess I am not the only reader who still considers *The Joke* his best novel to date, and the yardstick by which to measure the books that followed it.

This time, however, it is not the comparison with *The Joke*, but the comparison with Klima's novel, that helps me understand, at last, what has always bothered me in Kundera's recent work. Just as meeting the consumptive-looking twin brother of her apparently healthy and attractive fiancé could make a nineteenth-century bride cancel the wedding, *Immortality*'s brilliant narrator seems to me infected with the same bacillus that brought down his less appealing counterpart. The disease's name is Usurpation of Authority. A manipulative attitude toward both the world represented and the reader; making oneself a constant center of attention; an unconstrained inclination to lecturing, sermonizing, and speaking mostly in well-rounded maxims—these are the chief symptoms of the disease. And in acute cases, the affected narrator assumes the identity of a demiurge or some other divine being with unlimited creative possibilities.

The narrator of Kundera's new novel is such an acute case. He spins his story, ostentatiously enough, from a deliberately insignificant episode: in the health club that we have already mentioned, he is inexplicably moved by the gesture of an older woman who waves goodbye to her swimming instructor. Immediately (though for the last time, I promise) one is reminded of *The Joke*. The plot of Kundera's early novel also started with a deliberately insignificant episode, the mailing of a humorous postcard. The difference, however, is significant: *The Joke*'s action takes place in a reality—Stalinist Czechoslovakia—in which an apparently insignificant gesture could have significant, even tragic consequences, whereas *Immortality* is based in a world—modern Paris—where nothing matters anymore anyway, where what seems to be insignificant *is* insignificant, and would perish in the sea of General Insignificance if not for the narrator's watchful gaze and his demiurgic penchant for creating something out of nothing.

This particular gesture starts a chain reaction of associations that lead the narrator to the creation of a fully-fledged novelistic character called Agnes. Around Agnes, in turn, a small fictitious reality begins to build up, including her husband, Paul, who is a lawyer; their grown-up daughter, Brigitte; Agnes's sister, Laura; Laura's lover, Bertrand (a radio journalist); Agnes's own lover, Rubens; and one Professor Avenarius. What happens among this cast of characters could be easily trivialized by saying that, basically, it is the only sort of human interaction that Kundera has ever been genuinely interested in, namely, men and women sleeping with one another.

But mockery would be wrong: sex is by no means all that Kundera has always been writing about. Sex has always served him as a vehicle for more complex explorations or, better, as a particularly revealing model of the human self-contradiction that fascinates him most, which is our permanent suspension between the extremes of Appearance and Reality. For it is sex that provides access to the most undisputably genuine component of reality that our senses may experience, while at the same time it is nowhere but in sexual behavior that authentic experience takes on as many illusory and artificial disguises.

I can buy all this in principle. After so many years of reading Kundera, however, I still don't quite understand why it is necessary for his male protagonists to be such Warren Beatty-like studs in order to be Jean-Paul Sartre-like thinkers. Has Kundera secretly remained a believer in the Marxist idea of quantity (say, of fucking) turning into quality (say, of philosophizing)? One central image in *Immortality*, a double-portrait of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Ernest Hemingway walking arm in arm and exchanging pleasantries, seems to confirm that suspicion. It may well be that what we face here, I mean in Kundera, is the case of a Hemingway who wishes he was a Goethe. Or, more precisely: a Hemingway who wishes he was a Goethe who was a Hemingway, too.

Appearance and Reality, therefore, give one more performance as the chief protagonists in Kundera's new novel. Which means that, for all intents and purposes, *Immortality* winds up not really as a novel at all, but as another one of his philosophical parables. In Kundera's modern versions of this ultrarationalistic genre, human characters are conceived, very much in the eighteenth-century spirit, largely as examples of typical attitudes and ideas, and their interrelations are similarly supposed to illustrate possible kinds of tensions resulting from such characters and ideas coming into contact.

This is certainly the purpose for which this set of contemporary Parisian characters is needed in *Immortality*. Kundera manipulates them into performing numerous varieties of erotic liaisons—Agnes's love for Paul grows cold while she



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maintains her long-standing relationship with Rubens, while Laura is dumped by Bertrand and falls in love (or so she thinks) with Paul, and Agnes is killed in an accident so Laura can now marry Paul, but she begins an affair with Professor Avenarius, and so on. It seems as if all of them are artificially created cells under the microscope of some genetic engineer; and as far as their viability outside the laboratory is concerned, they are not much more than that.

Oddly enough, this is also true of the cast of performers brought on stage in the other layer of the novel's plot, the one that undertakes to illustrate the paradox of Appearance and Reality by recounting the love story of, for a change, real-life historic personages: Goethe and Bettina von Arnim. Bettina can be most aptly described as the early nineteenth-century, early Romantic prototype of a groupie. She intrudes herself into the lives of celebrities to gain significance herself, to become immortal by borrowing the radiance of Immortality from the truly great. Presented as being in love not so much with Goethe or Beethoven as with immortality itself, she serves Kundera as another clear-cut example of Appearance alienating itself from Reality, overshadowing it, and ultimately triumphing over it. As a result, even Kundera's real-life characters—Bettina, Goethe, Beethoven, and others—wind up similarly reduced to their unicellular incarnations as objects of experiments in Kundera's laboratory.

Is the laboratory's owner some sort of Doctor Frankenstein? I wish that he were. What bothers me most about Kundera is that he is anything but. In spite of his demiurgic air, he is simply unable to pour life into any of his people. Ultimately his hollow novel becomes itself an example of the triumph of Appearance over Reality that it so deplores. The Usurpation of Authority by his narrator is annoying because it is so unearned. Underneath the surface of wit, which adds some luster and makes the novel, as opposed to Klima's, at least pleasurable reading, the narrator's generalizing and sermonizing actually come down to a few shallow and banal complaints about the modern world's ills (the chief among them being, predictably, vulgarity):

> . . . Nowadays God's eye has been replaced by a camera. The eye of one has been replaced by the eyes of all. Life has changed into one vast revel in which everyone takes part.
>
> That is precisely the kind of pronouncement nowadays called a "sound bite." . . . The whole art of politics these days does not lie in running the *polis* (which runs itself by the logic of its own dark and uncontrollable mechanism), but in thinking up "sound bites" by which the politician is seen and understood, measured in opinion polls, and elected or rejected in elections.
>
> Nowadays . . . the imagologue not only does not try to hide his activity, but often even speaks for his politician clients. . . . We needn't be surprised by this self-confidence: in the last few decades, imagology has gained a historic victory over ideology.
>
> In our world, where there are more and more faces more and more alike, it is difficult for an individual to reinforce the originality of the self and to become convinced of its inimitable uniqueness.
>
> Europe has the reputation of a civilization based on reason. But one can say equally well that it is a civilization of sentiment; it created a human type that I call sentimental man: *Homo sentimentalis.*
>
> If our era, against the spirit of the great painters, has made laughter the privileged aspect of the human face, it means that an absence of will and reason has become the ideal human state.

Imagine that, but for *Immortality's* timely appearance, mankind would have had to wait, who knows, perhaps even a couple of weeks more, for someone else to open its eyes to these unknown truths! And note the lavish use of "nowadays," "these days," "in our world," "Europe," "everyone," and so forth, not to mention the thunderous "our era"—more unmistakable symptoms of the Usurpation of Authority.

This narrator/oracle spewing out these smooth maxims, ponderous statements, and while-u-wait diagnoses of "civilization's" or "our era's" infirmities reveals the fundamental self-contradiction of Kundera's recent writing. In his attempt to turn back the clock and to retrieve for the genre of the novel some of the authority it enjoyed two centuries ago, Kundera pretends to have forgotten that such authority could have only been assumed by literature in a world that still seemed to be governable by reason. Such a world, he himself claims, ceased to exist long ago. In our times, as Professor Avenarius succinctly puts it, "Reality no longer means anything to anyone."

If the professor is right, then there is not much sense in taking Diderot as one's model. There is not much sense in reviving the rationalistic genres and stylistic *clarité* of the Age of Enlightenment, either. And perhaps there is not much sense in writing at all, since in a Reality that "no longer means anything to anyone" no convincing human story can be told and no convincing human character can be created. *Quod erat demonstrandum*: in the laboratory of the book ironically called *Immortality*, no creature of Doctor Frankenstein's making is able to rise up from the assembly table and provoke the familiar cry: "It's alive! It's alive!" No, not here. As somebody once said, life is elsewhere.

STANISLAW BARANCZAK and Clare Cavanagh have edited the anthology *Polish Poetry of the Last Twenty Years of Communist Rule: Spoiling Cannibals' Fun*, which will be published this fall by Northwestern University Press.

# *Eyeless in Suez*

**BY DAVID FROMKIN**

## Suez
## by Keith Kyle

**(St. Martin's, 672 pp., $35)**

In 1917 the world changed its mind about imperialism. Until then, the course of empire had been followed proudly by conquerors who believed that God or history had entrusted them with a civilizing mission; and young Britons went out to govern India or Egypt, for example, in the same spirit in which Americans now join the Peace Corps. In the closing years of the First World War, however, as the United States entered and Russia left the conflict that was destroying dynastic Europe, Wilson's and Lenin's denunciations of imperialism suddenly took fire, like sparks on dry grass. Imperialism did not come to a halt, of course, but it could no longer be avowed; it had become the policy that dared not speak its name.

In our time, a country that occupies another country claims to be liberating it. Could old-time colonial empires such as Britain and France continue to survive in this modern era, with its changed climate of opinion and the new forces that had been unleashed? In the autumn of



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1956, the question was given its answer. As night began to fall on the retreating empires of old Europe, Britain and France turned to launch a last attack, sending armies back to lands they once had dominated easily. Suez, the artery of West-East passage, became for them the crossroads of past and future: there they met their nemeses.

The opening of most of the archives, and the publication of the relevant American records, has recently allowed historians to flesh out the astonishing story of how and why the Suez adventure came about. Keith Kyle, a former Washington correspondent of *The Economist*, currently a research fellow at the Royal Institute of International Affairs in London, has written a full account of the Suez expedition based on the latest scholarship. Like the story of Gallipoli, the story of Suez is an endlessly fascinating tale of folly and failure on a grand scale; Kyle's book is likely to be read—and deserves to be read—for many years to come.

In broad outline, of course, the story has been known for a long time. But what we have now is a more exact picture of what the many actors in the dramas said and did. There were so many of them; and since they tended so often to contradict themselves and to change their minds, getting the story line clear is a challenge. The sequence of events in Kyle's book is sometimes difficult to follow, but this is not an easy story to tell. For it is a narrative of almost endless mistakes and misunderstandings. Those involved in it deluded others, and also themselves. Repeatedly they tripped over their own lies. Suez was a watershed in history, and some good came of it; yet none can claim the credit, for the good that came of it was not intended.

Kyle's own career was affected by the events he describes, so he has a personal stake in establishing who was to blame for what went wrong. In 1956, he tells us, he was an admirer of Anthony Eden and intended to stand for Parliament as a Conservative, but he threw it over when the Suez story broke. He was aghast at what the Eden government did, and remains aghast now that he knows the details intimately. He tells the story from a British point of view, and naturally he focuses on where his leaders went astray. On this side of the Atlantic, however, the shortcomings of our own leaders may be of even more interest.

Eisenhower and his secretary of state, John Foster Dulles, imagined that the peoples of the colonial empires, though they rebelled against Europe, would accept guidance from the United States. In this illusion, the Americans were more like Europeans than they knew. Frenchmen, for example, whose ambitions to rule in the Arab world were feared and resented by Arabs throughout the first part of the twentieth century, blindly flattered themselves that Arabs avidly desired French rule. British intelligence officials in the First World War who had spent time in the Middle East knew that the claims of the French were absurd, but they could not see that their own claims to be loved in the Middle East were absurd, too. British officials repeatedly reported to one another that Arabs desired British rule and would not listen when Arab politicians told them otherwise.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, Americans could see that the Arab Middle East wanted to be free of France and England. But American officials believed that Arab leaders would perceive that Americans were different from the French and English, and would find *our* leadership acceptable, at least if it was exercised behind the scenes. In 1952 Kermit Roosevelt of the CIA looked for a leader who could pull Egypt together and exercise what the United States would regard as a constructive influence in the Arab world. In this connection Roosevelt met members of the secret Free Officers group then planning a coup d'état in Egypt. Gamal Abdel Nasser, an organizer of the group, became CIA Director Allen Dulles's preferred candidate to come out on top, and he did in fact emerge as Egypt's dictator. He was the prototype of the leader Roosevelt was looking for; and once Nasser was in power, the CIA acted in Washington as his friend at court. Some of this was made known years ago in an entertaining book by one of Roosevelt's colleagues, who taught Nasser's secret police how to foil coup d'états, while a CIA team set up an anti-American propaganda program for Nasser's use in case he had to outdemagogue opponents.

The CIA officials who sponsored Nasser were realistic in many of their expectations. They knew that, like any other authentic foreign leader, he had goals of his own that were not necessarily shared by the United States. All that they asked was that he be powerful enough to be able to make unpopular decisions. But they may have been deluding themselves in thinking that he *would* make unpopular decisions. Why should he? He was especially unlikely to make the decisions that they had in mind: to make peace with Israel and, above all, to help organize the Middle East against the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union was not, in the eyes of Egyptians, any particular enemy of Egypt's. Indeed, the Soviet threat was useful to Nasser in bringing pressure to bear on the United States; he did not want it to go away, for he could not have

## *Postcard of Degas' Washerwomen Carrying Washing*

They both lean away from smudged yellow,
Burnt sienna; their baskets heaped with pillows,
Pillow-heaps. The washerwomen's hips
(The skirted, aproned, muslin, gray) help
Them carry folded wash. Looking down,
Smeared with chalk, a scumble of glue,
They look where they are going and lean at you.

Dear A., If you were here, you'd laugh at all
The roaches in the Brite-Wash, touching crusted
Soap in empty washers. And drunks trudge in,
(You wouldn't laugh, but would you help?) coughing
Under smokey steam by the windows, talking
A kind of drawled homage to "a wonderful
Ohio," while women drink Coke and huddle
Away, smoothing warm shirts on hangers:
Their hands on husband ghosts and other ghosts,
Themselves: their hosiery and finery.
Winter colors, silver, white. They borrow
Soap. I don't need to help, don't need
To say anything, but if you were with me,
You'd whisper, "Have we joined the other ghosts?"

**JUDITH HALL**



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played his particular game of politics without it.

The United States in the 1950s conceived of world politics as a duel between America and Russia. In a way, it was; but Middle Eastern Arabs were among the many peoples of the world who did not believe it, who wished to see no further than their local issues. Americans may well have been right in arguing that the Soviet Union posed a potential threat to the independence of the Arab states, but they failed to understand that to the peoples of these countries, until recently ruled by England and France, and still much under the sway of the Western powers, the only threat to independence that seemed real was the immediate one: the one that was posed by our allies and by us.

Any authentic Arab leader at the time would have had to appeal to anti-Western sentiment. The best we could have hoped for was that he would oppose the Soviets as well: that he would aim at a Middle East free of outside powers, whether of the Communist bloc or ours, and not interfere with the supply of oil.

In backing Nasser, the younger Dulles apparently was willing to settle for that, but the older Dulles was not. The defense of the region against Communist Russia was the overriding priority in the Middle East for the secretary of state. He seemed to regard any local leader who could not be enlisted in such an effort—whose priorities instead were local, and therefore in tune with those of the elites and the peoples of the region—as an enemy. Thus it transpired that the CIA spent years searching for, and then helping to take and keep in power, exactly the sort of Middle Eastern leader whom the Department of State intended to overthrow.

Soon after taking office in 1953, Secretary Dulles traveled to the Middle East to meet Nasser. Dulles quickly realized, however, that Nasser would not lead in the direction desired, and he proceeded to set in motion an alternative anti-Soviet plan for the Middle East. It was the first step on the road to Suez.

The countries that border historically expansionist Russia, or that already have been occupied by Russia, are the countries likely to perceive Russia as a threat—a simple thought, but not one always borne in mind. Since Dulles did not foresee why Arabs would not be anti-Russian, he must not have understood why Turks, of course, would be. It may have been dumb luck that led Dulles to the talks with Turkey's Adnan Menderes, from which emerged the concept of a "northern tier" of states that would ally against Russian expansion. Turks had been fighting off Russian invaders for centuries; the United States did not need to persuade them to pursue a policy they would follow in any event. Iran, repeatedly invaded by Russia, was of a similar disposition. Pakistan, too, had an experience of Russian penetration in the days of the Raj, and was a natural partner of Turkey and Iran.

But bringing in Iraq, an Arab state, as a fourth partner was a fatal mistake. Iraq had no frontier with Russia and no experience of Russian invasion. All the anti-foreign sentiment of its diverse peoples was focused against not the far-off over-the-horizon foreigners, but the foreigners actually in their midst: the British, French, and Americans who owned Iraq's oil and dominated her national life.

Nuri Said, the elderly politician who had returned to office as Iraqi prime minister in 1954, had placed a winning bet in 1915 by coming over to the British side of the World War. Now he bet that the Allies would win again. By becoming the sole Arab member of the U.S.-backed Baghdad Pact against the Soviets, he made himself into the Western candidate for leadership of the Arab Middle East. So in creating the Baghdad Pact (1955), Dulles set up a leadership contest in which the United States and Britain backed Nuri against Nasser. Like Nasser, Nuri was ambitious to lead the whole of the Fertile Crescent, the region (Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel) that rulers from his Tigris-Euphrates valley had disputed with Egyptian Pharaohs since the dawn of history. In backing Nuri, the Americans were challenging Nasser.

A few months later Nasser established his independence by ordering arms in quantity from the Soviet bloc. Dulles decided that Nasser must be overthrown, but floundered, unable to decide how to do it. First the United States proposed to finance the High Dam at Aswan, showing that America offered welfare while Egypt's dictator wrongly preferred weapons. Then Dulles changed his mind and canceled the offer in a way calculated to humiliate the Egyptian president. Nasser trumped that, in a radio address on July 26, 1956, condemning "imperialist efforts" to thwart Egyptian independence, denouncing Britain and the United States, and announcing that Egypt would pay for the dam itself by using the revenues from the Suez Canal. It would collect these revenues itself, he declared: he had just signed a decree transferring to Egypt ownership of the Compagnie Universelle du Canal Maritime du Suez, the corporation that leased and operated the Suez Canal concession. The seizure was legal because both the company and jurisdiction over it were Egyptian, under the Convention of February 2, 1866, and because the shareholders (who were almost entirely European) would be fully compensated (so Nasser pledged) by payment for their shares at the closing market price the day before on the Paris Bourse.

The concession was due to expire, in any event, in 1968. Nasser was just moving forward the date when it would revert to Egypt. But his bold move was a public challenge to Britain, the Canal's biggest user and shareholder, and to its ally France. His challenge goaded them into doing what each government—for reasons of its own—had decided to do months before. Like Eisenhower and Dulles, they had decided that Nasser had to be destroyed. Frenchmen imagined that Algeria's rebellion against them, launched in 1954, was inspired by Nasser, and that without him the rebellion would collapse. Britons persuaded themselves that they were losing control of their Arab client state, Jordan, due to Nasser, and that if he were to go their influence would be restored. For Britain and France, then, the question was not whether to move against Egypt, but when; and the nationalization of the Suez Canal provided the occasion for, not the cause of, the Anglo-French attack.

In sum, the United States had played the major role in creating the crisis. The Eisenhower administration had been wrong either in trying to put Nasser up or in trying to pull him down; wrong, too, in proposing to finance the High Dam or in refusing to do so. If the Americans had been right in their zigs, they were wrong in their zags.

Anthony Eden and Harold Macmillan both held urgent meetings with Deputy Undersecretary of State Robert Murphy, a special envoy from Eisenhower, when the Canal was seized. Murphy cabled Washington that Eden and Macmillan "said British government has decided to drive Nasser out of Egypt. The decision they declared is firm. They expressed simple conviction military action is necessary and inevitable." The cable went on to quote the British leaders as saying they hoped the United States would support them, but would understand if America chose not to. They would go ahead by themselves in any event.

Eisenhower and Dulles responded by repeatedly advising the British not to use force. But at no point did they say that the Americans would stop Britain from doing so. In a telephone conversation on September 7, 1956, the president told Dulles that if Britain and France attacked Egypt, the United States could not really



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take a stand. A U.S. Special National Intelligence Estimate, prepared a couple of days earlier by the American intelligence community, saw only two possibilities with regard to such an Anglo-French attack: the United States participates or does not. The possibility that it might withdraw support from the Allies was not raised.

Thus Macmillan, chancellor of the Exchequer, had no reason to believe that the United States might withdraw financial support, even though his advisers had told him such continuing support was essential. After all, the Americans believed that Nasser should be overthrown, and disagreed only on how and when to do it; while urging Eden to try some other way first, Eisenhower admitted that "eventually there may be no escape from the use of force." But when Britain and France did attack Egypt in the late autumn, stupidly claiming that they were intervening against an Israeli invasion that France in fact secretly had instigated and prearranged with Britain, the American leaders became furious.

The Americans deluded themselves into believing that if they took a strong enough line, they could avoid being associated with the Allies in the minds of the peoples of the Third World. Harold Stassen was practically alone in the National Security Council in arguing that the "British had committed a terrible error. On the other hand, it was a vital friend who had committed this error, and our real enemy was the Soviet Union." (NSC records show Dulles attacking Stassen again and again "with great warmth.") If indeed it was playing to an audience in the Third World, the United States should have acted in front of the scenes, not behind them. There should have been speeches and gestures: appearances, not realities. Russia's Khrushchev publicly uttered empty threats to attack the Allies and won plaudits. But the United States actually acted, and with paralyzing effectiveness. It did so by financial maneuverings unintelligible and invisible to the public.

They concerned the value of the pound sterling. Britain lacked the financial resources at the time to maintain the pound's value by itself, and relied upon American support. This support the United States now shut off. Moreover, America kept the International Monetary Fund as well from helping England. Thus the British Treasury was suddenly faced with the prospect of financial disaster: a run on the pound, the collapse of the currency, a plunge into chaos. Yet only a handful of people knew this. Until Macmillan told them, not even his colleagues in the British Cabinet were aware of what the United States was doing and how it threatened Britain. The United States was turning back the Suez expedition, but effectively in secret. The Americans had gotten it wrong; the idea was not to do it, but to appear to do it.

Dulles asked the British foreign secretary afterward why the British had stopped short of victory at the Canal. Dulles sent a memo to Eisenhower asking the same question. Not even he seems to have understood that the U.S. Treasury had gotten its fingers around Britain's financial windpipe. It was Macmillan, at the Exchequer, who made the decision to stop short. He swung the Cabinet behind his view that the invasion had to be halted. He had reason until then to believe the Americans would never, by cutting off vitally needed financial support, risk letting Britain expire; now that they had done so, he ruthlessly drew the right conclusions. As Churchill had understood, Britain was now a global power only insofar as it was supported by the United States. Macmillan, shown by the Eisenhower administration that America would not help Britain hold on to her empire, saw that the empire therefore had to be let go. So it was that, as Churchill's true political heir, Macmillan went on to become Her Majesty's First Minister to preside over the liquidation of the British empire.

Britain had launched the Suez expedition in order to keep its empire. The expedition caused Britain to lose it. The United States had created a Middle Eastern policy for keeping the Soviets out of the Middle East. The policy at Suez brought them in. Ironies abound in the Suez story, and in this important and endlessly interesting book Kyle exposes them, at least as regards the Western democracies. He is weakest at explaining the Israeli point of view, with which he does not always sympathize. For example, he writes of "the intensity of Israel's refusal to give up land for peace," when Israel was refusing not to give up land, but to give up so much land that its existence would be imperiled.

Through no fault of Kyle's, there is little detailed information available from the Egyptian side. And that leaves a gap in the story. For this story is about an Egyptian: the once admired and then reviled Nasser. By 1956 Western leaders regarded Nasser as dangerous or even insane. They compared him to Hitler or (in Eden's case) to Mussolini. From the glimpses of Nasser afforded in these pages, those estimates were far off the mark. But in forming our own picture of him, we have little to go on in the newly available archival materials.

Eisenhower and Dulles, Eden and Macmillan, Mollet and his foreign minister, Pineau, and Ben Gurion and his general Dayan, all had concluded, in much the same words, that "Nasser must go." All of them hated Nasser with a passion. Eden, a Foreign Office Arabist by background, emerged from a milieu in which it was felt that Arabs love Englishmen; and when Nasser "stole" that love, Eden became emotional and enraged. It was Nasser, he believed, who had taken Jordan's Arab Legion away from its British commanding officers. That was when Eden resolved to overthrow Nasser. "I want him . . . ed," said Eden—not "destroyed," as we were told earlier, but (as Kyle now establishes) "murdered." The French, in turn, believed that Nasser was ruining them in Algeria. The Israelis believed Nasser aimed at their destruction.

So overthrowing Nasser was what the Suez expedition was really about. He was weak and the Allies were strong. Why did they not succeed? There were, of course, the lying and the bungling that Kyle describes in such detail. But in the end, it comes back to the Americans, which is what Suez demonstrated: England was forced to recognize that it could do no more than what America allowed.

But Eisenhower and Dulles, too, loathed Nasser. They, too, aimed at overthrowing him. So why did they stand in the way? Why did they save him? They saved him for a reason that Theodore Roosevelt would never have understood. They saved him because they worried that they might otherwise be called imperialists. And there is a measure of how much the world had changed since the revolutionary year 1917.

DAVID FROMKIN is the author of *A Peace to End All Peace: The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East* (Henry Holt).

## CORRESPONDENCE *continued from page 2*

support on Arab-Israeli issues. Iraq and Saddam's problems were reasonably analyzed, but my understanding of the man was profoundly wrong—he saw invading Kuwait as an alternative to reform. Over the course of 1989 I came to recognize that Saddam would not pursue reform. As tensions with Iraq started escalating in February 1990, I argued in various articles (in *The Boston Jewish Times* on May 3 and in *The Jerusalem Post* on July 12) that Saddam was responsible, motivated primarily by his postwar political and economic problems, now the standard interpretation of events. Mr. Chapman can keep his award. My split with "Arabist elites" emerged almost a year before Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. ●



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# WASHINGTON DIARIST

## Cabalist Kibitzing

IT IS "ONE OF THE MEASURES of the American revolution in Jewish history that an old problem of Jewish self-hatred has been replaced by a new problem of Jewish self-love. Or so I conclude from *Chutzpah* by Alan M. Dershowitz, though this shrill and platitudinous book argues precisely the opposite, that American Jews are not "pushy" or "assertive" enough, that "they worry about rocking the boat," that "the time has come for us to shed our self-imposed second-class status, drop our defensiveness, and rid ourselves of our pathological fear of offending our 'hosts.'" Myself, I have not been struck in recent years by the timidity of the American Jewish community in prosecuting its interests or ventilating its moods. Quite the contrary. We have been noisy and we have played rough, according to the fine rules of the American game. The Jewish citizens of the United States have behaved precisely as the free and coarse and pluralistic system of the United States teaches its citizens to behave. Something really did change here. And there is something thoroughly ridiculous about Dershowitz's refusal to take yes for an answer.

WHAT HAPPENS IN PEACE TO A mentality that was fashioned in war? That, approximately, is the psychological predicament of many American Jews, whose own experience doesn't tally with the martyrological traditions upon which they have been reared. The Holocaust, so unbearably close but so unimpeachably far, further aggravates the dissonance. In Dershowitz, however, the dissonance has become comic. Anti-Semitism in America being rather an anti-climax in the history of anti-Semitism, he is reduced to giving pages and pages of his crank mail, to posing sanctimoniously with a burned Israeli flag, and to making thoughts such as these, with which his apologia is riddled:

> When my Brooklyn friends and I get together for our periodic discussions, we compare notes on our perceptions of anti-Semitism.
>
> University Hall, where the president [of Harvard] has his office, was virtually *Judenrein* (Jew-free).
>
> Other "famous" anti-Semites include Tacitus, Cicero, Aleksandr Pushkin, Pierre Renoir, Thomas Edison, Henry Ford, and, of course, Richard Wagner.
>
> Every time I attend a gathering of Jewish children . . . I imagine SS guards lining up these children for the gas chambers.

Never mind that University Hall is *Presidentrein* (the president sits elsewhere). If the anti-Semites, and the memory of the anti-Semites, disappeared, they would take the Jewishness of this man with them, for it is founded on little else. Dershowitz is chasing ambulances through Jewish history. And this "proud and assertive Jew" turns out to be rather addled about his identity: Maimonides puts him in mind of Captain Kirk, he fails to detect a difference between Norman Podhoretz and Meir Kahane, he insists that a good Jew is a good civil libertarian and then proceeds to a long defense of the forced transfer of populations (which is the most disgraceful idea that a child of the Jewish past can entertain). His memoir is lousy with Hebrew and Yiddish imprecisions. Dershowitz's Jewishness, morbid, bellicose, middlebrow, political, comes down to this: If you bleed us, are we not pricks?

ALAN, *YINGELE*, LIGHTEN UP. OUR fathers were the victims. Those are not Nazis, those are WASPs. But the magnitude of Dershowitz's anxieties about WASPs would be impossible to exaggerate. "I am standing in the middle of Harvard Yard. On one side of the yard is the then-president of Harvard University, Derek Bok. On the other side is my mother, from Brooklyn . . ." This, pride? Pity the man, pity the Jew, who wrote those sentences without irony. And there are scores like them, on the order of "I needed to know whether I could compete with these well-dressed and self-assured WASPs who had used words like 'balderdash' and 'poppycock' in rebutting my debate arguments." Why do those words, and the people who use them, rattle the dignity out of Dershowitz? The WASP ascendancy in America is long over (as the sputterings of Gore Vidal keep proving). The pot melts providentially on. And there are few more convincing demonstrations of the edifying course of American social history than the career of Alan M. Dershowitz.

DERSHOWITZ DOES NOT SEE THAT he is the living falsification of his own fears because he is, let us say, too close to himself. Conceited, we used to call it in Flatbush and Borough Park; except that this conceit has been promoted into a feature of a people's fate. From *Chutzpah* you will learn (hang on, I almost forgot to disclose that I am treated briefly and skeptically on page 289) that in the last few decades nothing of any moral or legal or political significance has happened to Jews in the United States, in Israel, in the Soviet Union, in the academy, in the media, in the law, except through the "proud and assertive" offices of Alan M. Dershowitz. He is everywhere on the scene in the nick of time; he is Flashjew. As far as I can tell, however, the world, which is not a Jewish world, has been kind to Alan M. Dershowitz, and so there is something a little foul about the extent to which he believes that his appetite for publicity is a form of service to his people.

NOW HE HAS A NEW CAUSE. IT is Jonathan Pollard, "a Jewish zealot who put Israel's survival—at least as he perceived it—before the bureaucratic niceties of the classification system." That's not bad in the way of prettification, though it is not quite as good as the "clarification" that appeared in the *Long Island Jewish World* last month: "Previous articles referred to Jonathan Pollard as a convicted spy. Pollard was convicted of passing classified information, not spying, a more serious offense." Dershowitz and a growing number of *amici curiae* in the American Jewish community believe that Pollard's sentence was harsh by the standards of such offenses. Perhaps. But I find the sentiment spreading among more and more Jews that Pollard may have committed no offense at all, that he was even a kind of hero. After all, he spied on America for Israel, for America's friend, for what Dershowitz calls "only a close ally with whom we shared—and were legally obliged to share—the most sensitive intelligence." (Legally obliged? The Israelis were fools to run Pollard. They should have hired Dershowitz to sue for the secrets.) Call me a trembling, ignorant, quaking, anxious, self-loathing Jew, but it strikes me that the support of the United States for Israel has been so extraordinary, so constant, so generous, and so indispensable that Pollard's crime broke new ground in chutzpah.

**LEON WIESELTIER**



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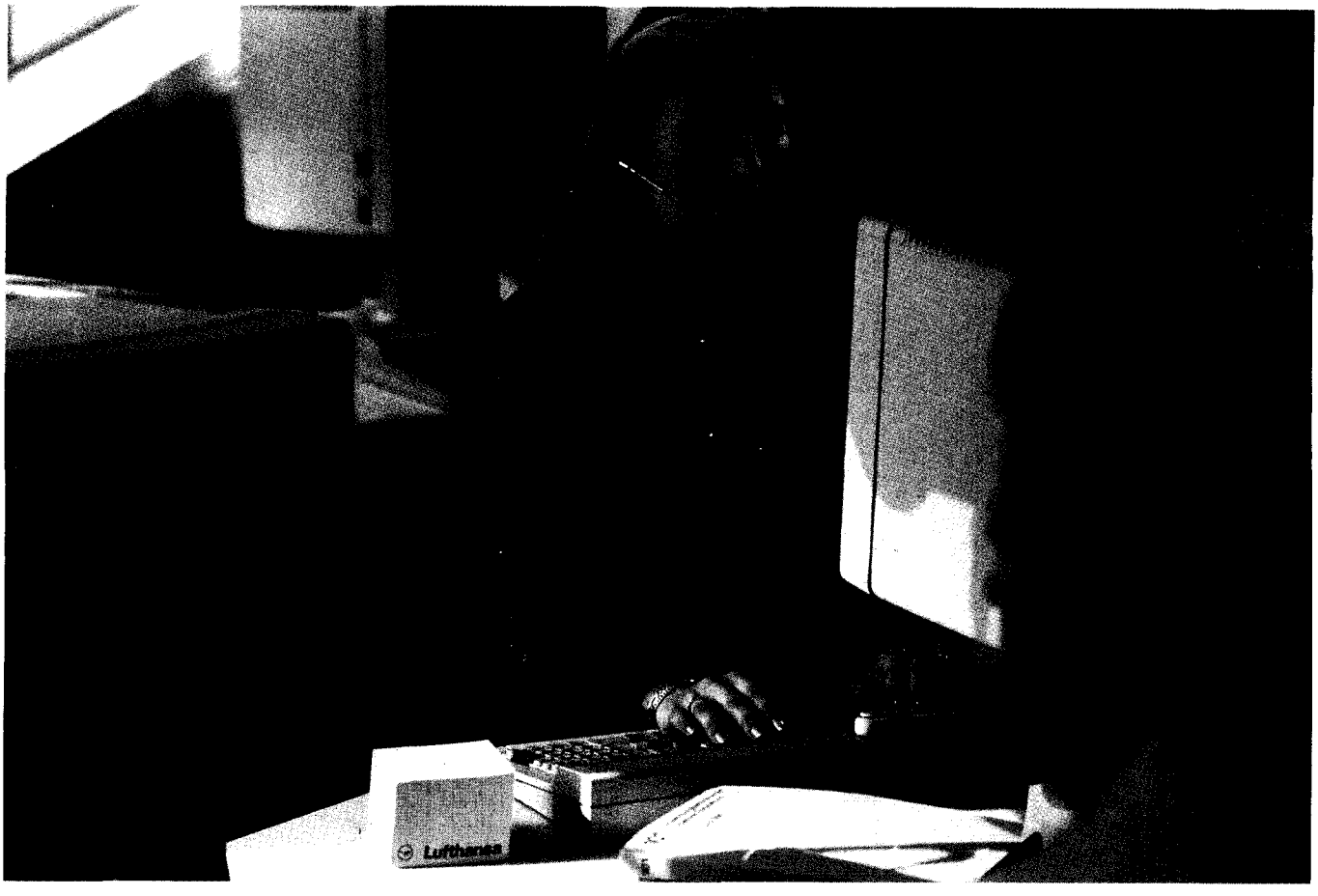
# She'll get you from Sydney to Bangkok to Budapest. And even help you pack.




Linda has been known to go out of her way when she makes a reservation. She not only gets you from point A to point B, she can also point out the weather, and if you'll need a sweater for cool nights or shorts for balmy days. Or she might advise you to pack something formal for that four-star restaurant in Milan. Now, we don't always expect Linda to go this far. She does it because she wants to make your trip memorable. It's a desire shared by everyone at Lufthansa. We like to think of it as a passion. One you feel at 30,000 feet or before you even leave the ground. *A passion for perfection*℠ that ensures you the best flying experience possible.

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